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THE SKINNY ON WEIGHT WATCHERS: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF WEIGHT  
WATCHER'S USE OF METAPHORS

By

ASHLYNN LAURA REYNOLDS-DYK

B.A., The University of Montana, Missoula, MT 2008

Thesis

presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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Weight Watcher's Metaphors  
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### **ABSTRACT**

Founded in 1961, with 1.5 million people from around the world attending meetings every week today, Weight Watchers has become a socially and economically significant weight loss organization with the potential to affect the lives of many people. With that in mind, this study describes and analyzes the rhetorical strategies of Weight Watchers. More specifically, this study depicts the metaphors used by Weight Watchers to describe its 2009 program, the Momentum Program. Which metaphors are used, how those metaphors function to create a reality for dieters, how those metaphors produce and filter meaning, and the actions those metaphors encourage and discourage are discussed. Additionally, the ways in which metaphors are embedded with Western culture's assumptions about obesity and weight loss is discussed. The implications of Weight Watcher's use of metaphors to describe the Momentum program are discussed as a rhetorical device that reinforces notions of the docile body, mind/body duality, normalization of the ideal body, and the care of the self. Finally, the implications of the use of mixed or multiple metaphors are discussed as being neither contradictory nor complimentary.

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## **PREFACE**

The topic of this thesis came about as a result of a number of things going on in my life and the lives of those around me during the time in which I prepared to write a Master's thesis. With that being said, I think it is important to provide some background information about my interest in this topic as well as my experience with this topic.

### **My Interest**

Being diagnosed with a thyroid disorder at the age of fourteen, I have always personally struggled with maintaining a healthy weight let alone, losing weight. With the thyroid malfunction slowing down my metabolism and the magnitude of the problem increasing bit by bit year after year, it has become harder and harder to maintain a healthy weight. Always being an active person who exercises regularly and eats healthy, I have often found myself frustrated with this disorder and have continually sought different techniques to lose weight and maintain a healthy weight. With that in mind, I have been interested in the social phenomena that surround a culture of weight loss for quite some time.

I have recently become even more intrigued with weight loss as my wedding engagement has come to an end and my wedding day has come nearer and nearer. This is because I have noticed people around me engaging in some strange social behaviors. It seems that weddings are a time wherein those involved with the wedding must look good which apparently, means losing weight. My mother for example, six months before the wedding, began following "The Flat Belly Diet" while my fiancé's mother started the South Beach Diet. Finding that the South Beach Diet was not working as adequately as she hoped, she began receiving weekly hormone shots while simultaneously living on a

progressive diet that starts with eating only 500 calories a day for x amount of weeks (the daily calorie intake eventually increased to 1500). Though not following any certain regimen except for the typical eat healthy and exercise routine, my father has begun to shed some pounds while my fiancé's father has also lost thirty pounds on Weight Watchers (this is about 8% of his body weight). Outside of our families, I have noticed that my bridesmaids have become somewhat disturbingly concerned about their weight. One bridesmaid for example, has begun Weight Watchers similar to my fiancé's father while another bridesmaid has begun the Atkins diet.

What is particularly interesting about these people's actions is that not one of them are in danger of encountering health problems due to their weight—none of them would be considered obese and though some may be overweight according to standardized charts, none of them are in immediate danger of health problems as a consequence of being overweight. In addition, I find it interesting that each of these people seemed to be content with their weight until a special occasion (which in this case happened to be my wedding) came up.

After considering the fact that weight loss comes in a variety of shapes and forms (e.g. The Flat Belly Diet, the South Beach Diet, hormone shots, Weight Watchers, etc.) combined with the fact that even those who you would least expect to be concerned about their weight (my father, for example) are, I have come to realize that I am not one of few people in this world who struggles with issues of healthy weight. Rather, I am one of many. With that in mind, I have come to the conclusion that weight loss is a larger, cultural issue that affects the lives of people everywhere, every day. Evidence of this can be observed by the fact that there are currently a number of reality television shows

including NBC's *The Biggest Loser*, Lifetime's *Diet Tribe*, and MTV's *Celebrity Fit Club* that allow people all over the world to follow along with others through their weight loss efforts. What is interesting about this is not only the fact that weight loss is such a prevalent issue but also the fact that weight loss is rarely, if ever, a personal issue—weight loss is very much a public issue that is significant not only medically but also socially and economically.

With that in mind, I have asked myself what it is about our culture that normalizes weight loss and perhaps even more importantly, why weight loss has become normalized to the point that it surrounds our lives on a daily basis. I cannot help but wonder why it is that people are so entangled in ideas about exercise, healthy eating, weight loss, and so on.

#### Experience with Weight Watchers and the Momentum Program

As a graduate student in Qualitative Methods, a Communication Studies research methods class, I chose to conduct an ethnographic study of the culture and ambiance that surrounds a participant in Weight Watchers' Momentum program. In the role of a participant-observer of Weight Watchers, I became a member of the organization in Missoula, MT from February 2009-May 2009 for a total of three months. As a participant-observer, I paid monthly fees, weighed in once a week, attended and participated in meetings once a week, and followed the guidelines of the weight loss program from week to week during the research period. This included exercising regularly and keeping track of the food I ate on a daily basis. I also created fieldnotes and gathered organizational artifacts (some of which serve as the texts being analyzed in this thesis) during the research period.

I feel it is important to point out my experience with Weight Watchers and the Momentum program for a couple of reasons. First, through this experience, I gained a great amount of knowledge about the organization and the program. Heyes (2006) notes, “weight loss dieting needs to be understood from within the minutiae of its practices, its everyday tropes and demands, its compulsions and liberations...” (p. 127). I agree with Heyes’ statement and know that my experience has increased my competence in researching and writing about weight loss and more specifically, about the metaphors used to describe Weight Watchers’ weight loss program, the Momentum program. Second, my hands on experience with Weight Watchers has been beneficial for me as a researcher and writer of weight loss metaphors because the experience allowed me to completely submerge myself in the organization and better understand the context of Weight Watcher’s weight loss rhetoric as well as the context surrounding Weight Watcher’s Momentum program metaphors.



**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Chapter 2: Identification of Metaphors	27
Chapter 3: Reality, Lens, Action	56
Chapter 4: Implications and Conclusions	71
References	87

## CHAPTER 1

### THE BODY, WEIGHT LOSS, AND METAPHORS

#### Introduction

“Stop Dieting. Start Living.” This is the theme of the Weight Watchers Momentum Program. It is often accompanied with narratives or testimonies of everyday people who have successfully lost weight and maintained their weight loss. This kind of approach leaves people feeling that with some patience, dedication, and hard work, they can achieve long-lasting weight loss—that they can be happy and healthy, and ultimately, live life to its fullest. The alternatives of course, are to be overweight and unhappy or to diet and be unhappy. With neither of these choices leaving room for happiness or “living,” the obvious alternative is to embrace the practices and values of a “weight watcher.” This idea, this new alternative, seems almost profound in that a traditional understanding of weight included two choices—be overweight or diet. Weight Watchers, however, offers what seems to be a new, novel alternative—a lifestyle—a way of living in which one does not have to diet or worry about being overweight. Conversely, the other alternatives do not provide a way of “living.”

Weight Watchers is just one part of an industry that has become a significant feature of the cultural landscape in the US over the last few decades. US residents alone spend \$50 billion annually on weight loss products, procedures, and programs (Weiss, Galuska, Khan, & Serdula, 2002). Weight loss products are promoted in a variety of ways including print and electronic advertisements, medical publications, and various media channels. These advertisements and publications are filled with influential rhetorical tactics such as metaphors, personal testimonies, narratives, and “scientific” facts. These tactics produce very persuasive messages about weight loss that have the

potential to influence fundamental life choices about eating and exercise patterns, as well as consumer choices about weight loss products and programs. One cannot help but wonder how these tactics work to motivate and persuade. That is, how do people get so wrapped up in diet and exercise? How does weight loss become a normalized, everyday, mundane kind of human behavior? And perhaps most importantly, what roles do the rhetorical tactics of commercial weight loss organizations play in influencing people's attitudes and actions?

Because of the significant influence of commercial weight loss rhetoric, it is worthwhile for communication research to explore the ways that these organizations constitute ideas about weight loss and attempt to shape behavior so as to attract and maintain customers. With their weight loss rhetoric full of metaphors, Weight Watchers and other commercial weight loss organizations have become very influential in shaping our understanding of weight loss and its related concepts. The meaning of weight loss and the way a culture of weight loss is created by commercial weight loss programs is an important phenomenon whose examination may reveal significant insights about an interesting and important everyday social phenomenon. In particular, an examination of Weight Watchers will shed light on the role that metaphors play in developing meanings and negotiating power dynamics related to weight loss.

A focus on metaphors is important because metaphors are very influential in shaping people's understanding of the meaning of concepts. Metaphors create a lens through which a concept can be understood, which inherently highlights certain aspects of a concept and deflects other aspects. Metaphors also encourage people to imagine issues and problems in specific ways that can elicit certain solutions rather than others. In

turn, these characteristics of metaphors give metaphors the power to advance particular interests.

This thesis, then, will critically examine the use of metaphors in the Weight Watcher's Momentum Program. In this chapter, I provide background on Weight Watchers, a review of relevant scholarly literature, and an explanation of my method of analysis. The chapter will begin with a description of Weight Watchers and the ways in which the company has communicated about weight loss as well as a brief overview of some of the literature that has researched the body, obesity, and weight loss. Scholarly literature in the field of communication that has explored the meaning of and uses of metaphor along with the implications of metaphor will also be discussed. This will lead to my research questions and an overview of the selected texts for analysis, which will be analyzed using Robert Ivie's method of identifying metaphors. The chapter will conclude with an overview of the chapters to follow.

### Weight Watchers

With 1.5 million people attending meetings every week, Weight Watchers is one of the most popular and well-known international weight loss programs in the world (Heyes, 2006; Vignali & Henderson, 2008). Weight Watchers was founded in 1961 by a woman named Jean Nidetch who, after having struggled with being overweight for many years, invited some women to her house to discuss weight loss. After following a diet plan and meeting with these women regularly, Nidetch concluded that the keys to successful weight loss were having a clear weight loss formula (calories in vs. calories out—the formula Weight Watchers continues to base its weight loss program on today) and communicating with others to provide mutual support about weight loss. With that,

Weight Watchers was created. Today using the 2009 Momentum Program, members of the public are presented with various advertisements both electronic and print, education guides, and much more. These materials reach a large number of people whether members of the Weight Watchers program or not. In less than fifty years, Weight Watchers has grown from Nidetch's living room to meeting facilities in nearly every town in the U.S. and in cities around the world. Currently, the newest product of Weight Watchers is its online weight loss program, which follows the same basic weight loss formula and uses the same techniques for weight loss as face-to-face meetings. Weight Watchers continues to grow, and more quickly every day, as people use the Weight Watchers Online program either in conjunction with weekly meetings or independent of the face-to-face meetings.

While Weight Watchers has proven itself to be a successful program being one of the largest in the world, it came under attack in the late 1980's and early 1990's for "deceptive advertising by making unsubstantiated weight-loss and weight-loss maintenance claims" (FTC News Release, 1993). This deception was the result of misleading pricing, false testimonials that were not representative of the average dieter's experience as a Weight Watcher, and other issues dealing with safety-related claims. As a result, the way in which Weight Watchers communicates to the public about its program and products has changed. To begin with, the organization changed the rhetoric of its commercials from a focus on weight loss (and, more specifically, from rapid weight loss) to a focus on "health" and "lifestyle." In the past ten years this focus has also been labeled, "wellness" (Pollack, 1999). Bishop (2001) notes that the more recent commercials depict how individuals seeking to lose weight can choose to live a certain

kind of lifestyle. The bottom line is that these new commercials have reshaped dieters' relationship to weight loss by creating a new system of meanings. Bishop discusses self-parody as being a rhetorical tool used by weight loss organizations and specifically by Weight Watchers. The irony that Bishop points out is that these diet companies are using dieters' disapproval with their previous advertising (e.g. rapid weight loss and fad dieting) to make fun of themselves and re-market themselves as a health oriented organization that is concerned with dieters' health and overall wellness.

Weight Watchers continues to re-market its programs and products. Recently, Weight Watchers combined aspects of the Core Program and Flex Points Program into a single program, the Momentum Program. Selling the same weight loss program under a new name, it seems that the only aspect of the program that has changed is the weight loss rhetoric associated with it. Based on my experience as a participant-observer, the new program emphasizes education and knowledge about weight loss so that "smarter" choices are made. In 2009, Weight Watchers changed the labels and rhetoric used to describe its programs and products, even though it continues to sell the same programs and products.

### Review of the Literature on the Body and Weight Loss

Arguments about the body and about obesity serve as a great starting point for a discussion about weight loss. A review of this literature will provide some context for the perceived need for commercial weight loss organizations such as Weight Watchers. Specifically, a review of this literature will help to shed light upon the ways in which the body, weight loss, and organizations like Weight Watchers have been studied and understood by different scholars.

Michel Foucault has played an important role in shaping today's scholars' thinking and understanding about communication and the body. Focusing particularly on the notion of power in his early work, Foucault viewed power as something that is exercised and not possessed. Foucault was especially interested in how the body and bodily activities are a site for the exercise of power. More specifically, Foucault (1977) labeled the power one has over other bodies as biopower, a concept that will play an important role in my analysis of Weight Watcher's weight loss rhetoric since biopower is a form of social control that deals with disciplining and/or managing people as a group. Similarly, as Foucault's work shifts from a focus on technologies of power to a focus on technologies of the self, "the care of the self" (part of the "art of living," Foucault, 1984) becomes important in my analysis of Weight Watcher's weight loss rhetoric as care of the self deals with transforming and reinventing one's self much like the process of weight loss.

Foucault's identification of the body as an important site for the exercise of power has been used by feminists like Susan Bordo to analyze contemporary forms of social control over women. Extending Foucault's arguments, Bordo (2003) focuses on the defining and constructing of the body as the site for struggles over the shape of power (whereas Foucault saw the body itself as the site to exercise power). Discussing issues like women's ideal self image and body image, Bordo argues that unhealthy and unrealistic body images are encouraged by the media. Focusing especially on the oppression of women, Bordo suggests that a number of consequences result from the struggle to define and construct the body.

One important consequence Bordo (2003) discusses is the duality of mind and body that is created through communication about the body (p. 13). This duality is in part, the result of an effort to gain power or control over the body where the mind is superior to the body and strength comes not from the body but rather from the mind. The mind/body duality enables the production of what Foucault (1977) referred to as the “docile body” (p. 136) which is a body that can be “subjected, used, transformed, and improved” (p. 136) because it has been disciplined into obedience. The mind/body duality and docile body arguments, driving much of Bordo’s research, explain that the body is treated as passive while the spirit or mind of a person is treated as active. The construction of the mind/body duality and docile bodies comes from media messages as well as the practices associated with weight loss. With that in mind, Bordo not only argues that weight loss dieting is a result of false beauty ideals but also that weight loss dieting itself reinforces those false beauty ideals in turn reinforcing the mind/body duality and docile body (p. 166).

Another consequence of the struggle to define and construct the body is that women put their health and ultimately their lives at risk by realizing and conforming to media norms. It is important to note however, that Bordo’s (2003) argument about the impact of media norms is a nuanced one that recognizes the broader cultural influence of media messages. Bordo states that women put their lives at risk “not because they have been passively taken in by media norms...but because they have correctly discerned that these norms shape the perceptions and desires of potential lovers and employers” (p. 20). With that in mind, another consequence of the struggle to define and construct the body is



that others (e.g. “lovers and employers,” p. 20), expect women to maintain unhealthy and unrealistic body images.

Taking a poststructuralist approach and making arguments similar to Bordo's, Thompson and Hirschman (1995) study the body as a “text of cultural meaning” (p. 140). They discuss the difference between self and body and how people caught up in the consumer culture fail to see those differences. Thompson and Hirschman (1995) really hone in on the ideas of problematization and normalization of the body. These functions occur when the mass media and medical science establish “normative standards” (Thompson & Hirschman, p. 147) which create what the public understands to be the average—the norm. In doing so, argue Thompson and Hirschman, certain body ideals are normalized and anything that deviates from those ideals is viewed as problematic. Products are then sold to “fix” those problems, creating what Thompson and Hirschman refer to as a consumer culture that problematizes and normalizes issues like weight loss. In other words, this kind of problematization and normalization of the body creates what Foucault refers to as biopower wherein consumer culture seems to control and have a special kind of agency or power over the bodies of others. Like Bordo, Thompson and Hirschman agree that the body ideals established and normalized in public discourse are far from the average and are simply unrealistic.

While these scholars focus on the media's role in defining and constructing normalized body images, others critique the science behind studies and discussions of obesity and weight loss as reinforcing what gets normalized and problematized. Michael Gard and Jan Wright (2005), authors of *The Obesity Epidemic*, as well as sociologist Abigail Saguy (2008), frame weight loss as counterintuitive to true science and

independent, intellectual thought. Gard and Wright suggest that the culture of weight loss is founded upon generalizations, assumptions, and false hopes about the human body. They state for example, “researchers... seem to be comfortable with making generalized claims about... obesity” (Gard and Wright, p. 63). Gard and Wright argue that researchers involved with studies of weight loss tend to make generalized claims about causal relationships whereas the relationship should be described, at most, as having a correlation. Gard and Wright point out the energy-in/energy-out formula to further illustrate this point. Basing its weight loss program on the energy-in/energy-out formula, Weight Watchers assigns point values to foods based on the food’s grams of fat, calories, and fiber. Gard and Wright argue that formulas like the energy-in/energy-out equation treat human bodies like “machines” (p. 38). In other words, according to Gard and Wright, these scientific formulas treat everyone the same and don’t account for individual differences leading to unwarranted generalizations about the human body, weight loss, and obesity.

Thus far, I have discussed literature dealing with the body and obesity. Using the body as the focal point of analysis, Foucault, Bordo, Thompson, and Hirschman have concluded that the body serves as a site of struggle over the shape of power, and that the media and consumer culture normalize certain body ideals in ways that make dieting and weight loss products the obvious fix to culturally constructed problems. From a different angle, Gard and Wright and Saguy look at the ways in which obesity is defined as a problem medically. Their arguments overlap in part, with those of Thompson and Hirschman with regard to consumer culture being at the root of the problematization and

normalization of weight loss leading to the idea that there are hidden agendas including profit motives.

These ideas will prove useful in examining Weight Watchers weight loss rhetoric and particularly in Weight Watcher's use of metaphors. Foucault's concepts of the art of living and the care of the self, for example, may shed light upon the ways in which Weight Watchers educates dieters about weight loss creating a specific lens through which weight loss is understood. Moreover, Bordo's extension of Foucault's arguments may increase our understanding of why and how dieters choose to listen to and engage in dieting practices in the first place and how metaphors function rhetorically to further motivate that participation. Additionally, because Weight Watchers has a line of products designed, marketed, and advertised specifically for consumers, Thompson and Hirschman's arguments about consumer culture may help determine whether Weight Watcher's underlying motives are influencing science as Gard and Wright might suggest. In other words, Thompson and Hirschman's work may provide some insight into the ways in which metaphors constitute a perpetual desire for weight loss that serves the interests of Weight Watchers.

Though each of the scholars discussed above have their own angle, all of these researchers criticize on the disciplinary practices of weight loss and dieting. While Bordo, Thompson and Hirschman, Saguy, and Gard and Wright draw out the negative consequences that are created by the current rhetoric that surrounds weight loss, Lesa Lockford (1996) and Cressida Heyes (2006) give more focused attention to Weight Watchers specifically, to which I will now turn.

Lockford (1996) studies weight loss in relationship to cultural ideals focusing specifically on Weight Watchers. In doing so, Lockford uses Turner's model for social drama to look at the performance of femininity of women during weight loss. She argues that Weight Watchers adheres to what Bordo, Thompson and Hirschman view as false, abnormal, cultural ideals for the female body. In addition, Lockford states that while members of the Weight Watchers program appear to negotiate their values (Bordo discuss these values), they are only negotiated "to the extent that the members are persuaded to accept them" (p. 309). Being a very successful business (as demonstrated in part, by the number of members the program attracts), this suggests that the strategies Weight Watchers engages in are very effective in persuading dieters and/or that a lot of people want to lose weight. One of the aims of my thesis is to look more closely at those strategies and more specifically, at the use of metaphors as a communicative and/or persuasive strategy. Ultimately, Lockford rejects Turner's model as being insufficient for explaining the recurring psychological conflict between body and mind that women experience when the lived body does not conform to the ideal body presented by the media, medical researchers, and others. (This is the conflict at the heart of Thompson and Hirschman's discussion of consumer culture). Because Turner's model fails to acknowledge this conflict—it does not account for these unrealistic body ideals that women are faced with—Lockford rejects Turner's model as being insufficient since it does not fully describe the experiences of women in Weight Watchers. With that in mind, approaching a study of weight loss and particularly of Weight Watchers, using metaphorical analysis will provide the opportunity to explore the ways in which weight loss metaphors help dieters overcome or work through this conflict/experience.

Heyes (2006), too, observes that existing discussion of Weight Watchers fail to address the complex experiences and conflicts felt by participants in Weight Watchers. In an article looking at Weight Watcher's and its practices, Heyes gets beyond the idea of weight loss as being completely oppressive and based on false beauty ideals stating that her argument "is a supplement rather than a challenge" (p. 136) to the arguments discussed above. Heyes moves beyond these arguments by looking at weight loss as a "process" of working on and improving oneself. While she doesn't completely reject the arguments made by Bordo and Thompson and Hirschman, Heyes does argue that there is more to weight-loss dieting than most feminist or poststructuralist literature lets on. She states, "the continued popularity of dieting cannot entirely be explained using a model of captivation by false beliefs" (Heyes, p. 130). In other words, false beauty ideals alone are not what keeps dieters dieting—there is something else that fits into the weight loss equation.

For Heyes (2006), weight loss dieting exhibits an enabling characteristic by which dieters gain knowledge, new skills, motivation to put themselves first, and the freedom to make positive choices. Drawing upon Foucault's notion of the care of the self, Heyes (2006) articulates four different kinds of care and the way in which Weight Watcher's rhetoric parallels those kinds of care. First is that Weight Watcher's rhetoric capitalizes upon Foucault's notion of improving one's self knowledge through weight loss. In other words, through successful weight loss, one may improve his/her self-knowledge. Second, is that Weight Watcher's rhetoric encourages transformation and/or reinvention of the self through the cultivation of new skills and capacities that are applied to other areas of life. Heyes' argues, the weight loss industry succeeds because of these

“enabling” aspects of diet (enabling aspects of diet include care of the self though that idea itself—that one is caring for oneself while being on a diet—is subject to criticism) stating, “normalizing disciplinary practices are also enabling of new skills and capacities” ( p. 128). These skills are appealing because they help dieters feel empowered, which gets back to Foucault’s notion of the body as being a means through which power is exercised. This power is enabled in part through one’s ability to control one’s diet and body. What’s more, these skills go beyond simple weight loss practices and provide people with life skills opening the door for all kinds of possibilities. Heyes argues that Weight Watcher’s weight loss system helps dieters feel as if they can have control over other aspects of their lives. Third, is that Weight Watchers encourages care for oneself before caring for others, and finally, fourth, is that Weight Watcher’s weight loss rhetoric encourages individual choice.

In conclusion, Heyes doesn’t see dieting as being purely disciplinary which is how she differentiates herself from feminists like Bordo. Thus, in terms of a metaphor analysis of Weight Watchers, it will be important to look at the ways in which metaphors are both enabling and disabling for dieters and specifically at how Weight Watcher’s metaphors draw upon different forms of care of the self motivating people to engage in disciplinary dieting practices.

My analysis of the metaphors used by Weight Watchers will intersect with and extend Heyes’ study of Weight Watchers. The upcoming analysis will look at the ways in which metaphors, as a rhetorical device, function to reinforce or deconstruct notions of the docile body, mind/body duality, and normalization of the ideal body. In addition, this analysis will not only look at the ways in which metaphors serve to discipline dieters but

also how metaphors function to enable dieters offering them positive and productive life tools such as new knowledge, skills, and habits by creating a certain reality and/or lens through which weight loss is understood. Moreover, this metaphorical analysis will draw upon notions of the care of the self as a way of addressing why it is that weight loss resonates so strongly throughout Western culture.

### Review of the Literature on Metaphor

One way organizations construct weight loss and its related terms and issues is through metaphors. Metaphors are figures of speech that provide correspondence between the known and unknown in order to help grasp understanding of some unfamiliar topic or concept (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). When metaphors are used, a concrete concept and/or clearly defined referent is used to structure a person's understanding of an abstract concept, providing what Cameron (2007) describes as a "mental representation" (p. 200). Ironically, metaphors are often thought of as creative and inventive yet at the same time their utility and understanding relies upon shared experiences.

With that in mind, there are certain terms that accompany discussions of metaphors in order to describe metaphors and the different components that make them up. It is important to identify and describe these terms and their application before moving on as they are consistently used throughout the academic literature on metaphors. The first two terms to be discussed are the vehicle and the tenor. The vehicle and the tenor with regard to being components of metaphors were first identified and labeled by I.A. Richards in his book entitled, *Metaphor*, in 1936. The vehicle is the term used metaphorically while the tenor is the term to which the vehicle is applied. In other words,

the vehicle acts upon the tenor whereas the vehicle provides a description of the tenor which is “the underlying idea or principal subject” (Richards, 1936, p. 97). Important to understanding this terminology is that the tenor may be implicit. That is, the tenor is not necessarily always explicitly expressed as in the statement, “He went flying through the woods after he saw a bear.” While running is the subject (tenor), it is not explicit.

Metaphor analysis is multi-disciplinary and many schools of thought accompany studies of metaphor. The ornamental theory of metaphors, for example, also known as the comparison view, understands metaphors as purely linguistic, rhetorical devices used for stylistic purposes. Aristotle is known as having recognized metaphors through this view with the label “ornament” coming from the idea that metaphors serve as a way of decorating language. In his later years, Aristotle elaborated on his understanding of metaphor as having a role both in philosophy or persuasion and in art. With regard to philosophy, Aristotle argued that metaphors are not essential but that they add clarity and style; he explained that metaphors are useful in lending elegance to language and arguments but are also dispensable.

In the substitution view of metaphors, metaphors replace literal statements serving as a replacement. The substitution view recognizes metaphors as useful for filling in gaps or describing and/or explaining things that cannot seem to be put into words. Thus, it expands the ornamental view of metaphors understanding metaphors to have more value in helping to describe and/or explain something. This leads to emotive theory, which suggests that metaphors are used not to simply decorate or add style to language but to express ideas in a way that also arouses beliefs, attitudes, and values through the spoken word. Before accepting the itneranimation view which adds “thought” (Richards,



1936, p. 94) to the emotive view, I.A. Richards embraced this depiction of metaphors. While adding the idea that there is an exchange of thought to the emotive theory of metaphors, the interanimation view sets forth the idea that this exchange of thought is based on an exchange between contexts. In other words, metaphors are not simply linguistic devices used as an ornament or means of expressing and inciting feelings. Rather, metaphors, in addition to everything discussed so far, are two thoughts expressed in one phrase interacting with one another to create meaning. In fact, I.A. Richards who embraced and wrote from this perspective, argued that metaphors are not dispensable ornaments but rather, are a ubiquitous and omnipresent feature of language.

Believing that the previously mentioned views of metaphors have too many limitations, Max Black introduced the interaction view of metaphors in the 1950's. The interaction view takes the interanimation view up a step by arguing that the vehicle and tenor should be thought of as a system of things rather than individual things. In other words, the interaction view of metaphors understands metaphors in a way that characteristics associated with the vehicle may also be associated with the tenor as a result of the metaphor. This means the metaphor can go well beyond what is directly expressed having a very powerful impact on people's understanding of the tenor.

The conceptual view of metaphors (used interchangeably with the cognitive view) embraces the interaction view but also sets forth the idea that context shapes metaphor use and understanding. In addition, the conceptual view argues that metaphors may reveal and even create and invent new meanings and expressions expanding our language. Most scholars today debate about the extent to which the value metaphors have as a rhetorical or cognitive device but do acknowledge metaphors as serving both

rhetorical and cognitive purposes. Accepting this understanding of metaphors, scholars emphasize the significance of context in metaphors. Robert Ivie (1987), for example, acknowledges the importance of context in studying metaphors as his first, most basic step in identifying metaphors is for the researcher to become familiar with the speaker's text and context.

Approaching metaphor from the conceptual view, much of the current literature on metaphors builds off of the arguments made by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980) in their book, *Metaphors We Live By*, which has served as a turning point in metaphor scholarship. After the publication of Lakoff and Johnson's book, scholars began to really embrace metaphors as conceptual. Today researchers continue to study and extend the arguments of Lakoff and Johnson. Bineham (1991), for example, builds on Lakoff and Johnson's argument about metaphors making meaning. He describes how the team sports metaphor used to describe politics functions in a way that creates a reality. Other research building on these ideas includes Boylstein, Rittman, and Hinojosa (2007) analysis of stroke recovery talk, Cameron's (2007) study on reconciliation talk, Condit and colleagues' (2002) research on the use of metaphor to describe genes, and Hayden's (2003) work on maternal politics.

Four key rhetorical functions arise from the current scholarly literature on metaphors. First, is the idea that metaphors constitute reality. In their 1980 book on metaphors, Lakoff and Johnson argue that metaphors are not simply linguistic tools but that metaphors actually "create realities" (p. 156) for people and that people act in ways to "fit" (p. 156) those metaphors and/or realities. Bineham's (1991) study on team sports metaphors builds off of this idea arguing that team sports metaphors in U.S. American

politics create a reality suggesting participants in team sports or politics embody certain characteristics and devote themselves to the team or nation's ultimate goal. Moreover, the reality this metaphor creates, suggests that the audience or constituents also participate fully committing themselves to the team and the team's goals. Also supporting the idea that a key function of metaphors is creating a reality, Boylstein et al. (2007) trace the changes in metaphors used during a person's recovery period to describe their experience. In doing so, patients attempt to create the reality of their experiences during their recovery period for someone else to understand. Metaphor is assumed to help those who have had stroke to explain/describe the experience(s) they have undergone. This assumption, in and of itself, demonstrates the power of creating meaning or realities current scholars, including Boylstein et al., understand metaphors to have. Because metaphors create realities, a study of the use of metaphors by Weight Watchers may provide an understanding of the ways in which the public is educated about and comes to understand concepts like obesity, weight loss, and health. With that considered, this kind of analysis may provide insight as to why or how it is that people get so wrapped up in weight loss.

Second, as metaphors create a specific reality, they also set up a frame and/or lens through which we view certain topics. In Burke's terms, metaphors inherently create a terministic screen. The lens that metaphors create can be enabling in that the lens helps to increase understanding. At the same time however, viewing a concept through a particular lens can also be disabling in that our understanding is limited—we are kept from focusing on other aspects of a concept that are inconsistent with the metaphor being used to describe that concept. Black was one of the first of those who researched

metaphors to get at this idea setting forth the notion that certain characteristics of the vehicle are selected for projection onto the tenor. Similarly, Condit et al. (2002) refer to the enabling and disabling duality of metaphors as a “dual process of production and filtration” (p. 303). Complicating our understanding of metaphors even further is Leah Ceccarelli (2006) who extends this line of thinking by incorporating arguments about mixed metaphors. In doing so Ceccarelli argues that mixed metaphors, rather than limiting or reducing our understanding can capture the complexity of the tenor by highlighting aspects of two or more different vehicles that are applied to the same tenor. At the same time, Ceccarelli notes that mixed metaphors may complicate our understanding of the tenor by highlighting inconsistent or even contradictory metaphorical entailments.

Thus, a study of the metaphors found in a set of texts may prove valuable/useful in determining how the person or organization issuing those texts highlights certain aspects of a concept and deemphasizes other aspects of that same concept (whether purposeful or incidental) directing an audience to a specific channel of thought. More specifically, a study of the use of metaphors by Weight Watchers may prove useful in determining things such as how the metaphors used by Weight Watchers to define and describe weight loss and weight loss related terms includes certain aspects of those concepts and exclude others. Finally, a study of the interaction of mixed or multiple metaphors within the Weight Watcher texts may prove valuable in pointing out both complimentary and contradictory aspects of the Momentum Program that are highlighted by the metaphors.

Third, by creating a lens through which a reality is created, metaphors in turn influence and even direct people's thought, reason, and actions. In other words, the way in which the public reacts to some social/cultural phenomenon is influenced by metaphors. This powerful facet of metaphors can be described using, once again, Bineham's (1991) team sports metaphor in politics. In the team sports metaphor, the metaphor functions in one way to direct people's actions by holding them accountable to others. Similarly, Hayden's (2003) research on the nation-as-family metaphor concludes that the nation-as-family metaphor has a number of consequences which include directing people's actions in the political arena. Specifically, Hayden shows how the nurturant parent, part of the nation-as-family metaphor, encouraged cooperation and empathy in the Million Mom March rally. The point to be made is that the use of a metaphor pushes people to perform certain actions and others to understand those actions in a way that promotes a certain worldview such as the Nurturant Mother in the case of the nation-as-family metaphor.

With that in mind, a study of the metaphors used by someone or some organization may help to describe how that person or organization constructs and articulates explanations about the concept and how those explanations encourage a specific kind of response, solution, or action. Specifically, a study of the metaphors used by Weight Watchers can reveal not only how Weight Watchers defines weight loss and weight loss related terms but also how Weight Watchers gets members of the public to act in certain ways, such as purchasing the company's weight loss products and participating in their weight loss program.

Fourth and finally, because metaphors set forth a particular lens through which concepts may be understood, one must ask what purposes that lens serves for the person or organization providing those metaphors. Metaphors can and are used in an intentional way to achieve self-interest of the advocate. Thus, a study of the metaphors used by Weight Watchers may provide some insight as to what the interests or agendas of Weight Watchers and its consumers are. Moreover, a study of the metaphors used by Weight Watchers may help determine how metaphors negotiate the need to provide accurate information (that benefits consumers) while also advancing the commercial interests of Weight Watchers. This is important because, as Gard and Wright (2005) suggest, public discourse about obesity and weight loss may actually be at the root of obesity, weight loss, and health problems in the first place. In other words, a study of the metaphors used by Weight Watchers may shed light upon hidden agendas and also help determine if the metaphors Weight Watchers uses could be causing more harm than they are good.

These four functions provide focal points for metaphor analysis. They inform the research questions for this study to which I will now turn.

### Research Questions

While some of the existing literature regarding obesity, diet, and the body (e.g. Bordo, 2003; Gard & Wright, 2005; Heyes, 2006; Saguy, 2008) does look at the way in which health is affected by weight-loss and obesity rhetoric, cultural imagery, etc. none of them analyze the metaphors commercial weight loss organizations use in order to communicate weight loss and weight loss related terms and concepts. Consequently, the literature may benefit from a look at the ways in which organizations like Weight Watchers use certain rhetorical strategies to shape potential customers' understanding of

issues like weight loss. Specifically, the literature may benefit from a look at the ways in which metaphors function to reinforce or deconstruct notions of the docile body, mind/body duality, and normalization of the body. Moreover, an examination of weight loss metaphors may reveal insight about the ways in which disciplinary practices enable new skills including the care of the self. Finally, an examination of weight loss metaphors may reveal insight about the functions of metaphors themselves.

Accepting the view of metaphors as both rhetorical and cognitive like many scholars today, I argue that metaphors are very powerful language tools. With that in mind, I pursue my study looking to see how Weight Watcher's metaphors perform the rhetorical functions of metaphors described above. Additionally, I seek to discover and describe any additional functions of metaphors that are not currently accounted for in the existing scholarly literature. Based on the discussion above, the logical questions to ask are how the metaphors used by Weight Watchers shape participants' perception of weight loss and what actions those metaphors encourage. This naturally leads to the bigger question, what are the consequences of weight loss and weight loss related metaphors used by Weight Watchers? Thus, the following research questions will guide my analysis of Weight Watcher's weight loss rhetoric:

- What metaphors does Weight Watchers use to describe weight loss and weight loss related concepts such as obesity, exercise, nutrition, and health?
- How does Weight Watchers use metaphors to create a reality for dieters?
- How do the metaphors used by Weight Watchers select certain aspects of weight loss and weight loss related terms and how do they deflect certain aspects of those same ideas?
- What actions or responses do the metaphors used by Weight Watchers motivate/encourage?

- How does Weight Watcher's use of metaphors advance particular interests/agendas?

### Texts

By means of educating its members, Weight Watchers has developed a series of ten booklets which are the crux of the company's current weight loss program, the Momentum Program. The booklets are provided to participating Weight Watchers members who attend weekly meetings. They range from twelve to fifty-six pages with each having a different topic but following the same general format. Topics range from an introduction to the weight loss program to managing hunger to engaging in weight loss activities or exercise to much more. These ten booklets will serve as my texts for analysis to help me address the questions listed above.

Weight Watchers booklets are meaningful in and of themselves as units of analysis because they supplement and highlight aspects of weekly face-to-face meetings providing members with a physical, material item to take home and refer back to beyond the meeting itself. Additionally, the booklets hit on aspects of the online weight loss program offered by Weight Watchers while also serving as both an educational guide and an inspirational tool. The booklets also advertise and promote other Weight Watchers products including food scales, food items, and much more. Moreover, the way Weight Watchers communicates weight loss through these booklets is important to analyze for many reasons. To begin with, Weight Watchers is the largest and best known commercial weight loss program in the world (Heyes, 2006; Vignali & Henderson, 2008). The number of lives this organization already affects and has the potential to affect is huge. In addition, organizations like Weight Watchers have become a significant source of health care information and education for those who are overweight,



obese, and/or seeking to lose weight. A metaphorical analysis of these texts will provide insight on how these tools teach people to understand, talk about, and participate in weight loss. More specifically, a metaphorical analysis of Weight Watcher's booklets may shed light upon the reasons for which people respond threats of being overweight and/or obese.

### Method

I approach the study of metaphors from a conceptual/cognitive understanding using Richard Ivie's method for identifying and analyzing metaphors as well as Michael Kent's idea of a super or master metaphor. Ivie set forth a clear, five-step method for identifying metaphors. In doing so he acknowledges the importance of context in identifying, describing, and understanding metaphors. Kent, on the other hand, approaches metaphor using more of an inductive approach wherein metaphors are/serve as tools to facilitate understanding of concepts (such as the world wide web) that would be otherwise impossible to understand.

Ivie embraces both the interaction and conceptual/cognitive view of metaphors. He gives a great deal of attention to context as the first step in identifying metaphors, according to Ivie, is becoming familiar with the speaker's text and context. Once familiar with the speaker's texts, the second step in identifying metaphors is to select "representative texts" for "a series of close readings" (Ivie, 1987, p. 167). In doing so vehicles should be marked and filed which leads to the third step, clustering vehicles into subgroups based on similar characteristics. Concept files should then be created. This is when separate files of vehicles are created for each cluster. Finally, each of these concept files are to be individually analyzed so that systems of metaphors can be drawn out. In

other words, the final step is looking at each concept file for patterns within clusters and between clusters so that overall systems of metaphors can be observed. This concludes Ivie's five steps. After reviewing and familiarizing myself with Weight Watcher's text and context (Ivie's first step), however, I have observed a recurrence of a long-distance race metaphor which may serve as a potential master metaphor working in ways similar to the managerial rhetoric and world wide web metaphor Kent examines as well as the nation-as-family metaphor Lakoff and Hayden examine. This kind of analysis may also lead to the discovery of one overarching theme or metaphor similar to the team sports metaphor in politics discussed above. With that in mind, the way in which master metaphors have been utilized by Weight Watchers will also be explored. After identifying clusters, concept files, and master metaphor(s) in Weight Watcher's booklets, I will ask and address each of my research questions.

### Preview of Chapters

In the first chapter of this thesis, I introduced Weight Watchers, providing a brief history of the organization as well as a description of its programs and products highlighting shifts in Weight Watcher's weight loss rhetoric. I discussed scholarly literature dealing with the body, weight loss, and more specifically, Weight Watchers. I also gave an overview of metaphors including a definition and description of the terms associated with them along with literature that has researched metaphors in the field of communication. After providing all of this background, I presented my research questions and gave a detailed description of the texts I will use to address those questions. Finally, I provided an overview of Ivie's (1987) method for identifying metaphors and noted that some attention will be given to the possibility of a master metaphor.

In the second chapter, I will identify the metaphors used in Weight Watchers educational booklets. This will be carried out using Ivie's five-step method discussed in the first chapter. I will then explore the possibility of a master metaphor which, from my initial readings of the texts, seems to be a very probable prospect.

In the third chapter of this thesis, I will look to see how the metaphors identified in the previous chapter create a reality or realities for dieters referencing Lakoff and Johnson's arguments about metaphors functioning to create those realities. Also, using the metaphor clusters and concept files identified in the first chapter, I will look at the ways in which Weight Watcher's metaphors create a lens through which dieters view weight loss based on Condit et al.'s (2002) idea of production and filtration. Specifically, I will use the clusters and concept files to deduce the ways in which certain aspects of weight loss are highlighted by Weight Watchers while others are deflected through the use of metaphor. Additionally, I will explore the ways in which Weight Watcher's metaphors may direct dieters to engage in certain actions and discourage them to engage in others while advancing particular interests or agendas.

Finally, in the fourth chapter of this thesis, I will discuss the implications and conclusions of this study. Specifically, I will discuss the implications of understanding the body, weight loss, and the Momentum Program through multiple metaphors.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **IDENTIFICATION OF THE MOMENTUM PROGRAM METAPHORS**

The purpose of this chapter is to identify and describe the metaphors and more particularly, the interaction of multiple metaphors used by Weight Watchers in the company's educational program booklets. After submerging myself into the texts and becoming familiar with Weight Watcher's text and context, I have depicted more than 350 individual metaphors each of which is related to weight loss, exercise, the body, and health. Metaphors identified are expressed both through written word and through visual images. After identifying metaphors in the texts, I made a note about the context in which the metaphors are found. In addition, I marked vehicles and made a note about the frequency of each vehicle. By marking vehicles I am able to categorize vehicles with similar characteristics into groups creating individual "metaphorical concepts" (Ivie, p. 167). I then placed metaphor concepts into broader categories to create larger groups or clusters of metaphors. The Weight Watchers texts exhibit four major clusters of metaphors. Figure One shows the concepts that I first identified and the clusters of metaphors those concepts in turn created.

Figure 1—Metaphorical Concepts and Clusters of Concepts

Tenor	Concepts	Cluster	Cluster Frequencies
Weight Watcher's Momentum weight loss program as...	<i>Momentum, Driving, Navigating</i>	Journey	155
Weight Watcher's Momentum weight loss program as...	<i>Surveillance, Training, Survival, Triumph</i>	Competition	96
Weight Watcher's Momentum weight loss program as...	<i>Mechanical, Scientific</i>	Technical Maintenance	50
Weight Watcher's Momentum weight loss program as a...	<i>Construction, Performance, Job</i>	Task	64

As you can see, each cluster describes Weight Watcher's weight loss program, the Momentum Program. With that in mind, there will be overlap and tensions within, between, and among each of the metaphor clusters. Additionally, as a result of describing the diet process, implications for more specific weight loss components including the weight watcher, the mind, the body, and weight loss resources arise within the cluster. To begin with, I will describe each individual metaphor cluster. I will then discuss the interaction of metaphor clusters and I will conclude with a discussion of the implications of the use of multiple metaphors simultaneously. Italics are used to designate or emphasize concepts, particularly the vehicle.

Journey—*Momentum, Driving, and Navigating*

The texts frequently refer to a weight watcher's participation in the program as a "Journey." In other words, the Momentum Program becomes a Journey for weight watchers. An important characteristic of the Journey metaphor cluster is the notion that there is an end in sight—a destination or an "ultimate goal" that is to be reached. This metaphor cluster suggests that you must gain *Momentum* to Journey—drive and navigate—in the direction of your ultimate goal. These metaphors also make clear the fact that the Journey is not necessarily going to be easy—Momentum is sometimes lost or hindered which is demonstrated in the texts through geographical metaphors such as "hills" and "plateaus" through which one drives and navigates. Fortunately however, the Momentum Program will be there to serve as or offer tools which may act as a companion for the weight watcher on his/her Journey helping the weight watcher to overcome the challenges and/or obstacles including "hills" and plateaus" that come with participation in the Momentum Program.

With that in mind, I will first discuss the Momentum metaphor found within the Journey cluster because before discussing the Driving and Navigating metaphors in detail, the various aspects of the Momentum metaphor must be discussed. As the title of Weight Watcher's weight loss program, "Momentum," suggests, weight loss requires movement through time and space. From the texts, this kind of movement is not always easy—or at least, movement in the right direction is not always easy. This is of course referring to the obstacles that naturally come with weight loss efforts. In addition, from the texts, part of gaining and maintaining Momentum is moving past old habits. For example, the texts tell the weight watcher to "think *beyond* the same old stuff," engage in

activity “*beyond* walking,” and eat food “*beyond* chicken.” These statements suggest that Momentum is not only movement but also that it is moving forward. In other words, one must Journey forward exploring new territory. Moreover, the statements above suggest that the Momentum Program can offer the weight watcher something more—something “*beyond*” the same old stuff. That is, the Momentum Program itself will help the weight watcher Journey forward. This brings me to the next concept found within the Journey cluster, Driving.

Much like Driving, a weight watcher, in order to maintain Momentum throughout this Journey, should “*steer* clear of feelings of deprivation” and “*steer* toward salads.” Similarly, when a weight watcher reaches a “plateau”—that is, when his/her weight loss stalls (like the vehicle one is driving might do), s/he should work through it and continue on the Journey. When it comes to exercise, a weight watcher should choose a “*route* with *gentle* hills.” In other words, the weight watcher should not over do it—the weight watcher should choose an exercise program (i.e. “route”) that will gradually but steadily (like a “gentle hill”) progress helping the weight watcher reach his/her weight loss goal. This kind of gradual and steady progress is precisely what the Weight Watcher’s *Momentum* Program is trying to accomplish. Weight Watchers recognizes that this Journey has the potential to turn into a rough ride however, with “*ups* and *downs*,” “*peaks* and *valleys*,” *twists* and *turns*” and much more. That is, not all journeys are without their obstacles—weight loss efforts naturally come with difficulties and challenges.

When it comes to navigation, weight watchers are provided with various tools including the E-tools, trackers, and various books and guides (some of which are actually the texts being examined in this thesis). Some of the books for example, are titled, the

“Dining Out *Companion*,” the “Complete Food *Companion*,” and of course, the “pocket *guide*.” Books such as these help the weight watcher feel closer to the program because it is as if there is an actual person there to support them—a “companion” or a “guide.” In other words, the text and the metaphors seem to go beyond the idea of those books simply serving as a tool similar to a map because the books actually become a “companion” to the weight watcher. This is more like having an actual person there to navigate. Moreover, tools like tracking itself provide further support by acting as an advisor or problem solver as tracking is truly “a great weight loss *advisor*” and even, “a savvy weight loss *problem solver*.” This again suggests navigation beyond the form of a map and rather in the form of an actual human.

In describing the weight loss program as a Journey, this metaphor cluster defines the person losing weight—the weight watcher—as a driver. Who the navigator is however, becomes unclear which brings up questions regarding the relative amount of control the weight watcher actually has while participating in the Momentum Program. In the Driving and Navigating parts of this metaphor, the texts do not make it clear if the weight watcher is supposed to be both the driver and navigator or just the driver while allowing the weight loss tools to serve as the navigator. On the one hand, the weight watcher is supposed to be making decisions—the one steering and *choosing* the route but on the other hand, s/he has a guide or navigator there to choose the route and tell the weight watcher where to go. Thus, the distinction between who the actual navigator is becomes blurred which begs the question as to how much control and/or power the weight watcher him/herself has over the weight loss process as well as how much control the Momentum Program or Weight Watchers has over an individual weight watcher.



Additionally, unclear from the texts, is if the Journey metaphor's references to geographical features are supposed to describe a dieter's daily environment or if they are supposed to describe the diet itself. On the one hand, it seems that these metaphors are meant to describe a dieter's daily environment because of statements like "real life has bumps" and "curveballs life throws at you." On the other hand, it seems that these metaphors are intended to describe the diet itself. For example, when weight loss "plateaus," or stops, the plateau is referred to as a natural and inevitable obstacle of dieting itself (as opposed to the plateau being a result of one's daily environment). The entire tenth booklet is designed to discuss this aspect of weight loss stating that "most members experience [plateaus] at some point" and that "weight loss always slows down." With geographical references being used both to describe a dieter's daily environment and to describe the process of dieting itself, what the "twists and turns," "bumps," etc. are, is unclear which obscures the answer to the question of how the dieter can best plan to overcome these obstacles which again leads to a question regarding the amount of control the weight watcher feels over his/her mind, body, life, and the diet process or the Momentum Program. In conclusion, this metaphor cluster describes the process of losing weight as a slow and steady yet challenging Journey. There are both tensions and ambiguities, however, within this metaphor which may be confusing to a weight watcher or potential weight watcher.

#### Competition—*Surveillance, Training, Survival, Triumph*

The Competition metaphor cluster is a very complex one as there are many aspects that accompany the metaphor concepts found within this cluster. The idea of Weight Watcher's weight loss program, the Momentum Program, as a Competition, sets

up the weight loss process as a sports contest or even more, as a battle. In doing so, the weight watcher him/herself becomes an athlete and/or a soldier. With that in mind, the concepts that fall within this cluster deal with athletes or soldiers participating in a sports competition or a battle with the first concept being Surveillance followed by the concepts of Training, Survival, and Triumph.

Whether from an athletic standpoint wherein teams watch films of other teams, from the perspective of a military unit where service agents monitor potential threats, or some other viewpoint, it can generally be assumed that part of a sound strategy is Surveillance. Surveillance helps one know what to expect and to be prepared which, according to the Weight Watchers texts, includes being armed and aware. In fact, Weight Watchers states, “forewarned is forearmed.” Moreover, the self surveillance concept is exposed directly in the title of the weight loss program, *Weight Watchers*. The idea of watching oneself continues throughout the texts wherein a weight watcher must “*watch* the amount [one] eat[s],” all so that s/he can “*watch* [his/her] body transform.” This goes hand in hand with having a “*mindful* eye,” “being *mindful* of the foods” one eats as well as being “*mindful* of [one’s] hunger.” Similarly, a weight watcher must “track” the foods s/he eats as well as the points values of those foods, the level of hunger/satisfaction one has upon eating, the activity one engages in, and the points values of those activities. Just as a surveillance system tracks someone or something, the tracking a weight watcher does is very much the same. In other words, a weight watcher must “manage” and “monitor” his/her environments as well as the food s/he eats. Finally, one last vehicle that accompanies the idea of self surveillance is “paying attention.” This vehicle occurs over and over throughout the texts reiterating the idea that one must be aware at all times.

In the end, this kind of self surveillance is intended to help the weight watcher be successful in his/her weight loss efforts. The Momentum Program serves as a form of Surveillance for the weight watcher. This brings me to the next metaphor concept, Training.

In this concept, the Momentum Program becomes a Training program because much like a sports team or even more, a military unit, weight loss requires Training. According to the texts, successful weight loss “takes *practice*” and a “solid *strategy*.” Like an athlete or a well trained soldier, one must have in place what Weight Watchers refers to, as a “strong *plan of attack*” in order to “*tackle*” the opponent. In other words, a weight watcher, like an athlete or soldier, must be prepared to be successful—s/he must practice and think ahead so that when the time comes, s/he can respond appropriately to weight loss obstacles. Other vehicles associated with this metaphor concept include “arming” oneself with weight loss challenge solutions, having a “guard” up, and “sticking” to the “game plan” with “survival” being the key to weight loss success. Again, the weight watcher is pushed to be prepared for weight loss obstacles that may interfere with the Momentum of the weight loss process. The weight watcher must train properly and implement the practiced strategy or plan in order to overcome those obstacles. With that in mind, the next concept is Survival.

The Survival concept is where the athletic and military metaphors seem to part ways. This is different because in a sports contest, a participating athlete usually wants to do more than survive—the athlete wants to win while with a soldier, the goal is not necessarily winning but rather, surviving. Thus, whereas the athletic metaphor seems to kind of dissipate, the military metaphor progresses at least one step further by

emphasizing Survival—almost a primordial kind of concept. The text goes as far as to provide a list of tips for “Potluck *Survival*,” for example. According to the texts, one must know how to “survive” a potluck dinner while on Weight Watchers—a weight watcher must always have his/her “guard” up when attending a potluck. In other words, a weight watcher must be “armed with... awareness” during times or events (like a potluck) when a weight watcher does not have control of his/her surroundings (particularly, the food surrounding him/her). This means the weight watcher should be prepared to fend off urges and temptations to eat foods that will get in the way of his/her diet success. Another example is found right in the title of Book Five which is, “Eat Out and on the Run: *Surviving* Dining Out.” In the end, Weight Watchers portrays Survival as a form of winning. This plays nicely into the final metaphor concept, Triumph, which is discussed next.

The sports contest metaphor comes back into play here wherein Triumph parallels winning for the athlete. For the soldier however, Triumph can mean a number of things—it may simply mean that the soldier survived as discussed in the metaphor above but it may also mean receiving a purple heart. Whatever way, whether for the athlete or soldier, Triumph indicates overcoming challenges and obstacles, achieving one’s goals, or success. The Weight Watchers texts assume that the ultimate goal of a weight watcher is to lose weight. This is how the Momentum Program serves as a means for Triumph. If a weight watcher can lose weight and reach his/her goal, s/he is successful and has won the Competition—the weight watcher has beat the diet. In other words, weight loss involves Triumph and it does so in a variety of ways. First, weight loss includes beating urges to eat unhealthy food or too much food. Next, weight loss includes overcoming

obesity or being overweight. In addition, Triumph in weight loss deals with overcoming emotions (which lead to “emotional eating”) and beating daily life challenges that cause those emotional ups and down. Finally, Triumph in weight loss is beating the diet itself which is reaching and maintaining one’s weight goal! With that in mind, if a weight watcher can “*stay ahead of hunger*,” “*keep hunger at bay*,” “*stay the course*,” and “*power through*,” s/he may Triumph beating all of these challenges and obstacles. This idea fits nicely into the overarching metaphorical cluster of Competition because in order to survive, overcome the diet, and be triumphant one must be prepared (in large part, through Surveillance and Training) for Competition having a solid plan or strategy for success in place.

As a whole, the Competition metaphor turns the weight loss process into a sports contest or battle wherein Surveillance, Training, Survival, and Triumph are valued. In doing so, the weight watcher him/herself becomes an athlete or a soldier wherein the weight watcher is pitted against something. What that something is however, is unclear. In other words, it is unclear whether the weight watcher is pitted against weight loss itself, against his/her daily environment, against his/her own body, against his/her mind, etc. While this is unclear, it is clear from the texts that the weight watcher is being pitted against something (or multiple things) as a result of which s/he must have surveil, train, survive, and triumph. Also emerging from the texts is the idea that the Momentum Program will serve as an ally (similar to the navigator in the Journey metaphor) or an additional defense mechanism for the weight watcher. Having the Momentum Program as an ally gives the weight watcher support similar to the support an athlete receives from his/her teammates and/or the support a soldier receives from his/her military unit.

Additionally, the weight watcher gains some control over the weight loss program as an athlete or soldier because the weight watcher in this metaphor cluster, as a result of Surveillance and Training, has a number of his/her own plays or plans in place. In conclusion, it is not completely clear *what* the weight watcher gains control over or *what* the weight watcher is defending him/herself against in the Competition metaphor. The weight watcher does however, have an ally—the Momentum Program—to help him/her Survive and Triumph.

#### Technical Maintenance—*Mechanical, Scientific*

Because there are certain techniques a weight watcher must follow while participating in the Momentum Program, the program becomes technical and more specifically, it becomes a form of Technical Maintenance. Thus, in this metaphor cluster, the Momentum Program is Technical Maintenance while the weight watcher becomes a mechanic or scientist, the body is treated like a machine, and weight loss as a whole becomes calculated, predictable and an overall technical kind of activity.

Throughout the texts, the weight loss process—the Momentum Program—becomes Mechanical wherein weight watchers are encouraged to “*kickstart* [their] success” and “*jumpstart* the scale.” As metaphors like these make their appearance over and over throughout the texts, the body becomes a machine that, like a dirt bike or some other automobile, can be kickstarted and/or jumpstarted. Just as machines send some kind of “signal” when they are not working properly, so does the human body according to the Weight Watchers texts. For example, while a car may “stall” and/or make strange noises signaling there is a problem, the body may become weak causing light-headedness and a loss of vision signaling that there is a problem. One way of preventing these kinds

of problems however, is through preventative maintenance. Yes, just as machines require preventative maintenance, so does the body. There are “tools” (including a tracker, plan manager, database, points calculator, and much more) to help a weight watcher to achieve and maintain his/her ideal body similar to the way there are tools to perform maintenance on a vehicles or other kinds of machines. By tracking for example, the foods one eats and the way one feels after eating those foods, the weight watcher will know what works well and what doesn’t for the future. The texts do warn that one must be careful of the tracker tool however, because “some people just aren’t *wired* for tracking” again suggesting that the body is some kind of machine. I must note that while this particular metaphor does acknowledge that human bodies are different and come in different varieties as not all weight watchers are “wired” the same, the metaphor still implies that the body is calculable and predictable like a machine.

While the body is a machine, the weight watcher him/herself becomes a mechanic or scientist who observes, studies, and even responds to the machine. Like a mechanic or scientist, a weight watcher is always “managing,” “monitoring,” and “measuring” his/her food, activity level, and weight. A mechanic or scientist, based upon the charts s/he has created from tests and data gathered, makes adjustments to various parts of the machine to make the machine run better. Similarly, a weight watcher, based upon the hunger scale for example, makes adjustments to the foods s/he eats in order to make the body feel more satisfied. In other words, there are certain “steps” a weight watcher, just like a scientist, must follow in order to get achieve the desired results.

Nearly all of the visual metaphors from the texts fall under this metaphor cluster. Many of the images found in the texts are pictures of tracking sheets, spreadsheets,

weight loss/math formulas, graphs, and charts which really feeds into the idea of maintenance. By having all of these graphs, charts, etc.—all of these checks in place for tracking the machine—the scientist or mechanic is better able to maintain the machine. These images remind the weight watcher that eating and activity habits as well as the body’s response to those habits are to be “tracked,” “monitored,” and “managed” setting forth the Momentum Program as both Mechanical and Scientific. Figures Two and Three provide examples to demonstrate this idea. Figure Two shows an image of a tracker. You can see that the tracker records a variety of information including a description of foods eaten, the points value of those foods, the level of hunger/satisfaction one has upon eating those foods, and much more. The tracker in Figure Two positions the weight watcher as a mechanic with the tracker resembling the maintenance log that mechanics use to record oil changes, tire rotations, mileage checkups, etc. Likewise, this visual metaphor functions in a way that positions the weight watcher as a scientist as a weight watcher’s tracker closely resembles a scientist’s observation journal.

Similarly, Figure Three shows an image of two line graphs created to track hunger/satisfaction signals. In doing so, the graph suggests that a weight watcher has acted like a scientist monitoring and tracking his/her hunger/satisfaction level. On top of positioning the weight watcher as a mechanic or scientist, these visual metaphors also implicate the body in ways similar to the way the written metaphors implicate the body as a machine. Using a tracker like the one shown in Figure Two and drafting charts and graphs like the ones in Figure Three suggest, once again, that the body is calculable and predictable just as a machine is. Thus, these images—the visual metaphors—reinforce the written metaphors by positioning the weight watcher as a mechanic or scientist who is



tracking or using the tools displayed in the visual metaphors as resources to compute and quantify weight loss. The visual metaphors suggest just as the written metaphors do, that the body is calculable and predictable much like a machine.

In conclusion, the Momentum Program in the Technical Maintenance metaphor becomes both Mechanical and Scientific. Both the written language and visual images position the body as a machine and the weight watcher as a mechanic or scientist. In doing so, the weight loss process itself becomes controlled. In other words, by positioning the Momentum Program as Technical Maintenance, weight loss becomes methodical or systematic while the weight watcher gains or at least, is able to feel, control over the weight loss process.

Figure Two—Tracking Sheet

### How to track

- A** Record what you eat and drink, and the portion size
- B** Write down the **POINTS** values of those foods
- C** Check off those that are Filling Foods
- D** Check off the Good Health Guidelines
- E** If you've used any of your weekly **POINTS** Allowance, mark it off
- F** Before and after each time you eat, assess your level of satisfaction. Are you hungry? Full? Just right?

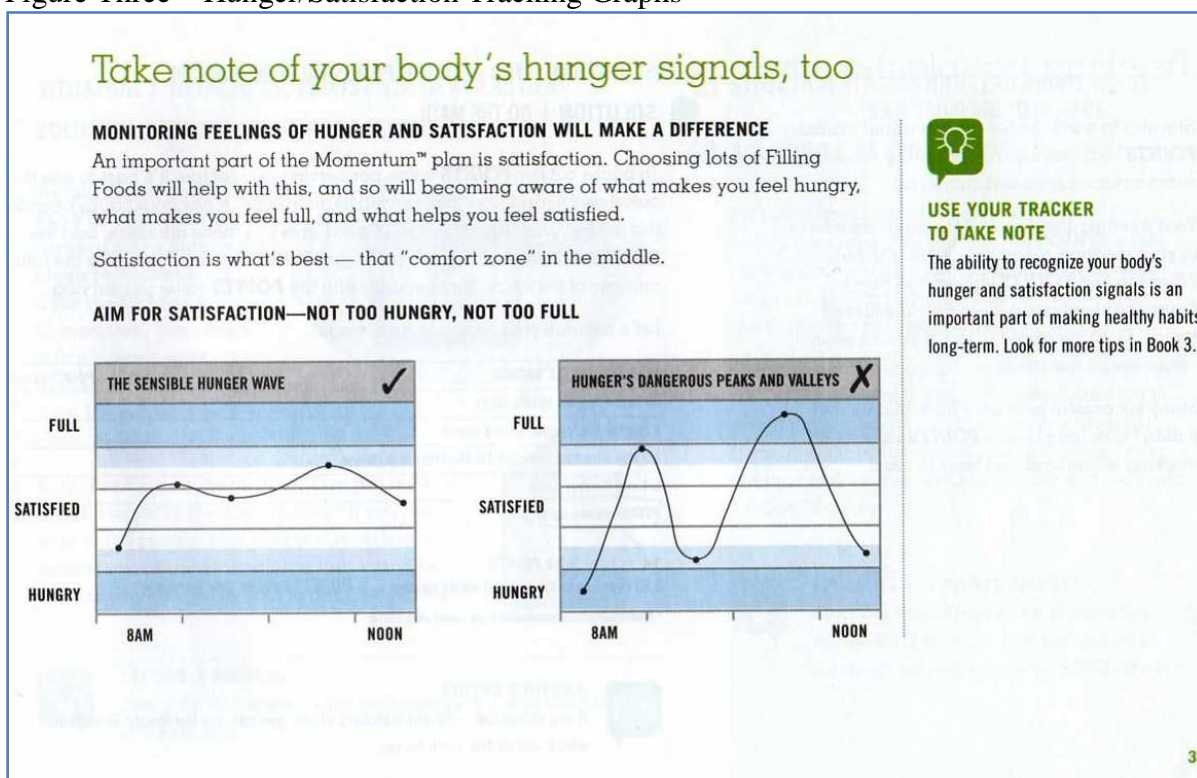
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**TRY TRACKING ONLINE**

People who both attend Weight Watchers meetings and subscribe to Weight Watchers eTools lose over 50% more on average than those who attend weekly meetings alone.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Based on 6 month study, Nguyen V, et al. Obesity. 15 (9s): A221, 2007.

Figure Three—Hunger/Satisfaction Tracking Graphs



### Task—Construction, Performance, Job

From the metaphors found in the texts, being a weight watcher is very much a Task. In other words, the Momentum Program itself is a Task—a difficult but rewarding Task. While Technical Maintenance discussed as a separate metaphor cluster above is very much a kind of Task, the metaphors in this cluster deal with preparing, creating, and/or building something new—not performing work or maintenance on something that already exists. In other words, the outcome with the Task metaphor is something new—something that did not exist before—whereas the outcome with the Technical Maintenance metaphor is simply a different version (and ideally, a better, improved version) of what existed before. The metaphors in the texts suggest that participation in the Momentum Program is like constructing or designing a puzzle or house, performing some kind of artwork, and/or working at a job. Thus, a weight watcher becomes a

constructor, actor or performer, and/or an employee while the program itself becomes a means to an end.

Much like constructing a puzzle, home, building, or something similar, the Momentum Program involves “building,” “connect[ing],” “attach[ing],” and much more. In other words, the weight loss program deals with “*building* better habits,” watching “little *bits* of food *add up*,” “*attach[ing]*” certain memories to particular foods and feelings, and so on. In piecing together a puzzle, as with participation in the Momentum Program, one gets to create something and in doing so is able to reach a goal. All these activities however, occur within boundaries. For example, there are pre-cut pieces for the person working on the puzzle and there are blueprints for someone constructing a house just as there are pre-determined point targets and values for a weight watcher. Just as the Construction of a puzzle or building limits the creative ability of the person putting it together, Weight Watchers limits a weight watcher’s ability to be creative when selecting foods to eat and putting together recipes. In other words, within the daily points target, the weight watcher can choose whatever foods s/he wants—it is up to the individual weight watcher to choose the means by which s/he will reach and stay within the daily points target. The weight watcher must stay within the limits or boundaries of his/her points. There is however, an end in sight and just as the person completing the puzzle and/or house can see what the end product is supposed to look like (from the blueprints), the weight watcher also has an idea of what the end product is supposed to look like.

In a Performance, one must be “creative” in order to get the part and engage an audience. This is similar to the ways in which a weight watcher must be “creative” by “explore[ing] new recipes and cooking techniques” in order to keep themselves and their

families interested in the Momentum Program. There is however, still a script one must follow and again, there is an idea as to what the end product should look like. With the Momentum Program serving as a Performance, the weight watcher becomes an actor or performer. Just as an actor rehearses for a Performance, a weight watcher engages in “mental rehearsing” with regard to choosing foods that are “smart” and getting motivated to engage in exercise.

Like a Job, weight loss requires hard work but in the end there is a “pay off” for that work. In other words, while an employee receives a “pay off” for his/her hard work in terms of cash, a weight watcher might receive a “pay off” in terms of weight loss or in the form of new knowledge and skills. Additionally, a weight watcher in the Momentum Program is much like an employee working a Job because just as an employee, by working extra hard, can earn rewards such as additional vacation days, cash bonuses, or other gifts, a weight watcher can “earn” activity points by exercising which allows the weight watcher to eat additional food, see an increase in weight loss, or receive some other kind of “bonus for the body.” In other words, ideally, with both a Job and with weight loss, the harder you work, the more you are rewarded. Moreover, while an employee receives benefits like health insurance, a weight watcher also receives benefits like decreased chances of heart disease, diabetes, and other obesity related illnesses.

In defining the Momentum weight loss program as a Task similar to a performance, construction project, or job, the weight watcher, albeit within limits, becomes a constructor of the particulars of his/her weight loss program in the Construction metaphor while s/he becomes an actor or performer in the Performance metaphor and an employee in the Job metaphor. The Construction, Performance, and Job

metaphors all hold two very important things in common. The first is that each has boundaries and second is that they really help one to understand what is meant by the idea of an end in sight—there is an “ultimate goal.” That is, in each of these metaphors, one can visualize the end product or goal just like the weight watcher visualizes his/her final product or goal.

### Interaction of Metaphor Clusters

Each of the metaphor clusters discussed above describes the Momentum Program and its components and in doing so, things like the weight watcher and the body are implicated in specific ways. Through each of these metaphors, Weight Watchers provides different ways to conceptualize weight loss and the various components—both positive and negative—that come with it. While each cluster of metaphors discussed above has its own unique characteristics, the metaphors dynamic in that the clusters interact and communicate with one another. With that in mind, we must now turn to a discussion of the ways in which these metaphor clusters work together and overlap as well as the ways in which the clusters work against one another causing tension or contradiction between clusters. I will begin by discussing the interaction of the Journey and Competition metaphors and then introduce the interaction of the Technical Maintenance metaphor with those two clusters. I will conclude by bringing in the Task metaphor and the way it interacts with each of the three—Journey, Competition, and Task metaphors. While this section will focus on the overlaps and divergences of the four metaphor clusters, a more detailed discussion of the ways in which the individual metaphors construct a reality, highlight and downplay aspects of weight loss, and encourage or discourage action will take place in Chapter Three.

### Journey and Competition

When thinking about the Momentum Program both as a Journey and as a Competition, the two metaphors sometimes work together reinforcing the implications of each. At other times these two metaphors clash and ambiguities and contradictions arise. With regard to working together, both the Competition metaphor and the Journey metaphor offer a long term perspective. In other words, both the Journey and competition metaphors get at the idea of establishing and maintaining momentum over time. For example, the “gentle hill” metaphor (part of the Momentum Program as a Journey cluster) which suggests gradual but steady progress (or, momentum) overlaps with the idea of having a competitive unit that will “power through” and “stay the course” (again, Momentum). Moreover, part of preparing for Competition is choosing the proper “route.” In other words, both the Journey and Competition metaphors involve planning for the future where choosing a “route” on a Journey can serve almost like putting into place a “strategy.” Additionally, with a “companion” or “guide” on his/her Journey, the weight watcher has what is very similar to an ally. This is how the two metaphors are similar—they have extra support whether it is a navigator on a Journey or an ally on a sports team or in battle. These metaphors are however, more than just similar. The Journey and Competition metaphors interact and work together to create a more complete understanding of the Momentum Program because in order for the Journey to be successful, one must have a competitive strategy including an athlete or soldier that is armed and aware so as to move past any obstacles that might interfere with the Momentum of the Journey. A sound competitive unit will help a weight watcher

“push past plateaus” while Driving, for example. All in all, a good competitive unit will ensure that Momentum is maintained throughout the Journey.

The Competition metaphor however, pushes the weight watcher to be more active than what the Journey metaphor (specifically, with regard to obstacles) pushes the weight watcher to do. While both warn the weight watcher about the inevitable challenges of weight loss that will arise, the Competition cluster provides specific advice and examples to the weight watcher about how to prepare oneself and overcome those challenges (like surviving the potluck, for example). In other words, the Competition metaphor puts into place specific or strategic mechanisms whereas the Journey metaphor is much more passive, allowing obstacles to happen where the weight watcher is to steer around and avoid them rather than actually fight against those obstacles. In turn, the two metaphors offer different roles to the weight watcher. In the Journey metaphor, the role of the weight watcher is unclear because at some points the weight watcher can decide to steer around obstacles but at other points, the weight watcher is only the driver and not the navigator and thus does not make the navigation decisions. With the Competition metaphor, it is up to the weight watcher to decide which and how many competitive mechanisms s/he will put into place. This means that the Competition metaphor shifts much of the weight loss responsibility onto the individual weight watcher whereas in the Journey metaphor, the program or organization, which is sometimes understood as being the navigator, retains much of that same responsibility. Thus, the individual weight watcher is held accountable in the Competition metaphor and much of the accountability is removed from Weight Watchers itself. In the Journey metaphor however, Weight

Watchers, to some extent, is also held accountable—all responsibility is not placed on the weight watcher as an individual.

### Journey and Technical Maintenance

The Journey and Competition metaphors also interact with the weight loss as Technical Maintenance metaphor. To begin with, when combining the ideas of the Momentum Program being a Journey and the Momentum Program being Technical Maintenance, one may come to understand the program as a systematic, calculated, and/or methodical adventure. In other words, just as a route, should be carefully selected by a navigator, a scientist should carefully calculate and plan his/her research project or a mechanic should carefully carry out maintenance on a vehicle. While both the scientist and navigator are looking to explore new things, they start out with an idea of the general direction they would like to head. Additionally, both respond to obstacles or challenges in a somewhat systematic manner. That is, for both the navigator and the scientist in the Weight Watchers texts, there is a protocol in place for how one should respond to obstacles. While these similarities provide consistency across the metaphors, the metaphors also add to one another helping to increase a weight watcher's understanding of the Momentum Program. In some ways the Technical Maintenance metaphor leads us to understand the means by which a weight watcher is able to go on his/her Journey. This is of course, by means of a machine (e.g. a car or pickup), or the body. So, while it remains unclear (as discussed in the Journey section) what the geographical references are referring to, it does become clear that the machine itself (the means by which one gains or establishes momentum) is the body and that the body experiences those geographical features including “bumps,” “plateaus,” etc. In other words, the



combination of these two metaphor clusters has shed light on what it is that the weight watcher is using to go on his/her Journey.

The two metaphors diverge from one another however, because the Technical Maintenance metaphor leaves out the emotional experiences of a weight watcher. If it is only the body that is the vehicle or machine, only the body experiences those “ups and downs,” “twists and turns,” etc. contradicting the texts which tell us that the geography of the selected route in the Journey metaphor can also be emotional—part of the mind. In other words, the technical focus of the Technical Maintenance metaphor encourages us to think about maintenance in a physical way while overlooking ways of thinking about the emotional experiences of a weight watcher.

#### Competition and Technical Maintenance

This brings me to the interaction of the Competition and Technical Maintenance metaphors wherein the Momentum Program is strategic and formulated much like it is in the interaction of the Journey and Technical Maintenance metaphors discussed above. The place where these two metaphors overlap most significantly is through the concept of Surveillance. This is because the Competition metaphor and more specifically, the Surveillance metaphor, position the weight watcher as an observer just as the Technical Maintenance metaphor, which positions the weight watcher as a scientist, does. By this I mean that the weight watcher in both of these metaphors “tracks,” “monitors,” etc. as an observer. The weight watcher in both of these metaphors has a variety of tools to “track” or “monitor” his/her body. Additionally, the weight watcher in both of these metaphors, is able to respond to issues that come up during the surveillance/observation periods by

changing points targets, eating habits, and other things. In other words, watching and planning in particular, are highlighted when these two metaphors interact.

These two metaphors diverge from one another however because the body and mind are treated as one in the Competition metaphor. The body and mind are both capable of overcoming challenges and fending off weight loss disruptions (e.g. in the Competition metaphor the weight watcher is “mindful” while s/he also “stay[s] ahead of hunger”) whereas in the Technical Maintenance metaphor, the two are treated as separate. In the Technical Maintenance metaphor, the body is merely a machine—it is passive—and the mind is treated as a scientist who plays a more active role in participating in the Momentum Program. The role of the body and the mind then, becomes confusing when thinking about these two metaphors together. In the Technical Maintenance metaphor, the ability of the mind to control the body is highlighted whereas that is not the case in the Competition metaphor.

#### Technical Maintenance and Task

The final metaphor discussed in the first section of this chapter, is the Task metaphor. The weight loss program as a Task metaphor interacts with the Technical Maintenance, Journey, and Competition metaphors. First, the Task metaphor interacts nicely with the Technical Maintenance metaphor because just as constructing a house or piecing together a puzzle comes with technique, so do scientific experiments and maintenance of vehicles or machines. Constructing a house and piecing together a puzzle, just like a scientist runs a test or a mechanic services a vehicle, is usually pre-formulated to some extent. With that in mind, these metaphors reinforce one another highlighting the pre-calculated nature of the Momentum Program.

Where these two metaphors diverge however, is with the outcome. While a scientist, in performing tests and conducting research, might have a slight idea of what s/he is looking for and/or what the end product might look like (a hypothesis), scientists are more exploratory and open to a variety of outcomes whereas the constructor of a puzzle for example, is not as flexible. Scientists are often trying to answer a question whereas someone constructing a puzzle has a clear picture in his/her mind of what the outcome should be. In other words, “the end in sight” concept is not as clear in the Technical Maintenance metaphor as it is in the Task metaphor.

### Journey and Task

The Journey and Task metaphor interact and reinforce one another by highlighting an endpoint. Whereas there is a destination the weight watcher wants to reach in the Journey metaphor, there is an outcome or product the weight watcher wants to create in the Task metaphor. Both metaphors leave it up to the weight watcher (though the weight watcher receives tips from his/her navigator) to decide the means to reach the destination or achieve the outcome. The Task metaphor also addresses some of the ambiguity in the Journey metaphor. As discussed in previous sections of this chapter, the Journey metaphor blurs the distinction with regard to who the navigator is which confuses the role of the weight loss organization and the weight watcher him/herself. The Task metaphor suggests that the weight watcher has control of decisions but only within certain boundaries that are set forth by the program or organization as a weight watcher should “get creative and explore new recipes and cooking techniques” that are low in points values. In other words, the Task metaphor purports that the weight watcher makes the navigation decisions although the Momentum Program itself provides suggestions

and advice to make sure that the navigator navigates within the parameters of the program.

### Competition and Task

Finally, the weight loss program as a Task metaphor interacts both in consistent and contradictory ways with the weight loss program as a Competition metaphor. To begin with, when a weight watcher becomes an athlete or soldier s/he must Train just as the weight watcher or performer in the Task metaphor must “rehearse” or “prepare.” A weight watcher must even perform and practice being prepared. Moreover, just as being a weight watcher can be a Job, so can being part of a sports team or a country’s national defense. A weight watcher must perform tasks like monitoring, and tracking. Upon doing so, the weight watcher will be rewarded by earning extra points, losing weight, etc. (just as an athlete and/or soldier may earn special honors or an employee may earn bonuses). If the weight watcher however, fails to do his/her Job, s/he may face consequences. Just as an athlete or soldier may have to do extra push-ups in a work out, an employee may have to put in overtime. In all these ways, the Competition and Task metaphors reinforce one another.

The Competition and Task metaphors diverge with regard to how active of a role the weight watcher plays. The weight watcher in the Competition metaphor is both responsive and assertive (like a defense and an offense) whereas in the Task metaphor, the same person is primarily assertive (mostly offensive). In other words, the weight watcher in the Competition metaphor “watches,” “stays guard,” etc. responding when threatened while also taking an active role by “planning ahead,” “take[ing] strides toward the goal,” and/or “practicing several of the [good] habits.” In this second part, where the

weight watcher is active, s/he similarly takes an active role in the Task metaphor by doing things like “building,” “connecting,” etc. Thus, the weight watcher is pro-active and assertive in trying to achieve his/her goals in both metaphors but s/he is not as responsive in the Technical Maintenance metaphor as s/he is in the Competition metaphor where there is both an offense and a defense.

### Concluding Remarks

In many ways, these metaphors and the concepts and clusters they fit into define the Momentum Program is and its purposes and roles. In addition, they help define who and/or what a weight watcher is or should be. The weight watcher is a driver/navigator, an athlete or soldier, a mechanic or scientist, and a constructor, performer, or an employee. Other things such as the body and mind are also inherently defined through the use of some of these metaphors. The connection between all of these roles is Momentum. Within each metaphor, the goal is to establish Momentum, maintain Momentum, or both. In doing so, there is an end in sight—an “ultimate goal.” The means by which one will achieve that goal and the role one will play in reaching that goal is different however, in the different metaphors.

There are both advantages and disadvantages to having multiple metaphor concepts in play in the text. Weight Watcher’s use of multiple metaphors to describe the Momentum Program is beneficial in part, because no single metaphor can fully address the open-ended complexity of social life. That is no, single Momentum Program metaphor can fully help us understand what the program is, what its purpose is, who the weight watcher is and what his/her roles/responsibilities are. The interaction of multiple metaphors helps to clear up some aspects of the program that are not completely clear in

one single metaphor. For example, the Technical Maintenance metaphor helps us understand the physical and/or mechanical maintenance part of weight loss but does not help us understand the emotional challenges and obstacles that come with it. When the Journey metaphor is added however, we can understand both aspects of weight loss. Thus, the use of multiple metaphors simultaneously, is beneficial because it provides the weight watcher with more information about the Momentum Program. In other words, multiple metaphors capture a wider range of the diverse experiences and aspects of weight loss.

At the same time, multiple metaphors may filter the potential meaning each individual metaphor has. When a weight watcher considers the reality a metaphor creates, there is a lot to comprehend—the potential meaning of each metaphor is huge. Multiple metaphors together, in part, help narrow down all of that information as the metaphors interact with one another. Thus, the potential meaning each metaphor has is filtered by understanding the various metaphors together.

Likewise, multiple metaphors simultaneously are beneficial because they provide different ways of organizing the Momentum Program. In other words, multiple metaphors offer alternatives so that if one metaphor doesn't quite work, another will. Take for example, the fact that there are all of these different roles for the weight watcher to understand him/herself to be in—the chance that one of those roles will work is greatly increased through the use of multiple metaphors. In other words, having all of these metaphors in play at once might be beneficial because a more diverse group of people are able to identify with the program by identifying with one or more of the metaphor clusters. Similarly, each of these metaphors helps people address the common challenges

or obstacles of weight loss by providing a variety of ways or means to go about overcoming those obstacles.

Finally, which metaphors a person chooses to use to identify with and understand the program through may reveal insight about that person. In other words, a weight watcher's metaphor choice could go as far as explaining if that person is mentally healthy or unhealthy, for example. Boylstein, Rittman, and Hinjosa (2007) discuss this idea with regard to the metaphors stroke recovery patients use to describe their experience. In their study they found that the different metaphors patients choose, suggests whether that patient is at risk for depression. Likewise, the metaphors weight watchers choose to identify with may reveal characteristics about that person. In addition, the metaphor a weight watcher chooses to identify with may also tell us how close that person is to reaching his/her goal in his/her "Journey" or "Task," for example. Finally, each metaphor may come with different levels of weight loss or goal-reaching success. Thus, a weight watcher's weight loss success, may depend on the metaphor s/he has selected. For example, it may be that if a weight watcher identifies with one of the metaphors that focus more heavily on the goal (rather than the means) such as the Task metaphor, s/he may be more successful in his/her weight loss efforts. At the same time however, the metaphor selected and how successful the weight watcher is, may also depend on the previous experiences of the weight watcher and how s/he understands that metaphor. Additionally, a weight watcher may choose to identify with more than one metaphor which complicates the idea of a weight watcher's success being dependent on the metaphor s/he identifies with. Thus, whether one's metaphor choice affects his/ her

ability to meet his/ her goal or to be successful in the program becomes an area for possible future research.

One disadvantage of multiple metaphors is that in capturing and describing a wide array of experiences and aspects of weight loss, they in turn create a lot of work for the consumer of the metaphors because s/he must organize all those aspects. In other words, there may be too much—too many roles to comprehend, sort through, and choose from. Similarly, a disadvantage of multiple metaphors stems from the wide array of weight loss aspects described in the metaphors because those aspects, at times, become contradictory. For example, the role of the weight watcher as an individual dieter versus the role of the Momentum Program and/or Weight Watchers (the organization), becomes at times, unclear. Additionally, the mind and body are sometimes separated from one another while at other times, they are not. While all of the metaphors are coherent, they are not necessarily consistent because they don't provide one single image. In other words, they make sense together but don't provide one single, consistent reality of the Momentum Program. Like Lakoff and Johnson (1980), Ceccarelli (2004) notes that the contradictions created by multiple metaphors is not necessarily a bad thing. Rather, notes Ceccarelli, one must look at the entire stretch of discourse to determine whether or not multiple metaphors increases or decreases understanding of the tenor, an issue I will address in Chapter Three. In conclusion, the utility of multiple metaphors in play in the text simultaneously is multifold, resulting in both a number of advantages and disadvantages.



### CHAPTER 3

#### RHETORICAL FUNCTIONS OF THE MOMENTUM PROGRAM METAPHORS

When looking at the overlaps and divergences of the metaphors in the second half of Chapter Two, the ways in which the metaphors create a specific reality or lens, how they highlight and downplay certain aspects of that reality, and how they encourage action begins to become apparent. In this chapter I will examine the ways in which the Momentum Program as a Journey, as a Competition, as Technical Maintenance, and as a Task, creates a reality or multiple realities for dieters. Additionally, I will look at the ways in which those same metaphors create a lens of production and filtration through which weight watchers view weight loss. I will also look at the ways in which the metaphors discussed in Chapter Two push weight watchers to engage in certain actions while discouraging them to engage in others and finally, I will look at the ways in which the Momentum Program metaphors reinforce the negative moral assumptions in Western culture about obesity and weight loss.

##### Metaphors Function to Create a Reality or Multiple Realities

Traditional views of metaphor argue that metaphors *describe* realities. Like Lakoff and Johnson (1980) however, I argue that the metaphors do more than describe a reality—metaphors actually function to *create* or *construct* realities. In other words, metaphors “compose the ‘building blocks’ of [a] group’s social reality” (Darrand & Shupe, 1983, p. 2) “structuring an individual’s mental representations” (Cameron, 2007, p. 200) of some concept such as weight loss. The metaphors discussed in Chapter Two create a reality for participants in Weight Watcher’s Momentum Program by creating mental representations of weight loss and more specifically, of the Momentum Program.

The different Momentum Program metaphors structure the reality of the program as an adventure, a tool, a system or method, and a duty. Structuring mental representations or realities of the Momentum Program allows weight watchers to refer to, identify with, categorize, quantify, reason, and so on about the program. Each metaphor offers a different reality of the various weight loss program components.

In the Journey metaphor a reality is constructed in which the Momentum Program becomes a slow and steady albeit somewhat challenging adventure as one “make[s] [his/her] way to [his/her] ultimate weight goal.” The Momentum Program adventure becomes something the weight watcher engages in and with by “dealing” with obstacles and moving “beyond the same old stuff.” With that in mind, the reality of weight loss is that it is a deliberate and a responsive process in which one must both “choose” a path and “steer clear” of certain obstacles. The weight watcher then, in order to be successful based on the reality of the Journey metaphor, must not only be able to plan ahead by, for example, selecting a “route” but also be able to think on his/her feet being alert so that s/he can “steer” around any weight loss challenges and obstacles that come his/her way.

Alternatively, in the Momentum Program as a Competition metaphor, a reality is constructed in which the program becomes both an ally and a means by which one can fend off difficult weight loss challenges. Here the program is an instrumental tool that is used to help one accomplish his/her goals. Through Surveillance (which is carried out using Weight Watcher resources/tools like the “tracker”) and Training, the Momentum Program offers tools to the weight watcher by teaching him/her how to “reject the food” and get into the right “frame of mind.” Additionally, through Survival, the Momentum Program is the tool—the program becomes an ally who is there to help the weight

watcher not only survive but also to Triumph. The program becomes a fellow teammate or soldier who “practice[s]” with and helps “prepare” the weight watcher. The Momentum Program becomes a practical instrument, or tool, in helping the weight watcher reach his/her goals.

In the Technical Maintenance metaphor, the Momentum Program becomes a calculated system or method through which one can achieve weight loss. For example, by maintaining a “hunger scale” or a “record of achievements,” a weight watcher’s participation in the program becomes observable. In addition, by using things such as the “points calculator,” the weight watcher can more easily “track” the foods s/he eats and the activity s/he engages in. With that in mind, the body becomes calculable and weight loss becomes a system. Meanwhile, the Momentum Program functions as a whole to provide a systematic method for how to read, recognize, and respond to the scale and/or record. The reality of the Technical Maintenance metaphor then, in some ways, is similar to that of the Competition metaphor because again, the reality of the program here, is that the program becomes a tool a weight watcher may use to accomplish his/her goals. In summary, the reality of the Momentum Program in the Technical Maintenance metaphor is that the program is a systematic method or tool designed to help the weight watcher actively track and reflect on his/her weight loss process.

Finally, in the Task metaphor, the reality of the Momentum Program is that the program is a duty—it is something someone does, something that can be done. For example, a weight watcher must “juggle” his/her busy life with eating right and exercising regularly and in doing so, special “skills” are required. When carrying out a duty or task like this, the reality of the program is that the weight watcher is working

toward something—s/he is trying to accomplish something and that hard work will be required to accomplish that. In conclusion, the weight watcher in the Task metaphor, does, or performs, the program and the program is something that can be done or performed.

Weight Watchers, states McCorkle and Mills (1992), “implies a whole world through his or her metaphors [wherein] the listener is being invited to reconstrue the world in a new way” (p. 58). In setting forth various metaphors, Weight Watchers allows participants to understand the world and the Momentum Program in different ways—as an adventure, tool, system or method, and/or a duty. Consequently, weight watchers will begin to understand the roles of his/her body, mind, the organization, weight loss resources, and him/herself differently depending on which metaphor or reality one identifies with. Moreover, some of these realities may begin to overlap which is seen particularly in the discussion of filtration that follows this section.

#### Metaphors Highlight and Downplay

The potential metaphors have to produce meaning is huge. Through context however, this meaning is filtered. This is referred to by Condit et. al (2002) as the process of “production and filtration” (p. 303). Whether intentional on behalf of the speaker or not, some aspects of metaphors are highlighted or filtered in, and others are downplayed or filtered out. The Journey, Competition, Technical Maintenance, and Task metaphors both highlight and downplay information about the Momentum Program and the various aspects of weight loss that are associated with it creating a lens through which weight watchers can understand the Momentum Program.

For example, the Journey metaphor highlights choice on behalf of the weight watcher by telling the weight watcher to “choose a route.” In addition, the Journey metaphor highlights exploration of new ways of living by encouraging “changes of scenery” and “thinking beyond the same old stuff.” Endurance is also highlighted in this metaphor through the emphasis on the “long run” and “push[ing] past” obstacles and challenges. By emphasizing choice, exploration, and endurance however, the rigid rules that accompany participation in the Momentum Program (like staying within your daily points target) are downplayed. That is, the Journey metaphor does not remind the weight watcher of the constraints or rules of the program. Likewise, in emphasizing these same aspects of weight loss and particularly by emphasizing endurance, specific techniques for *how* to “steer” around those obstacles are downplayed. That is, the Journey metaphor does a good job of acknowledging that there will be challenges and obstacles but it does not offer any suggestions for how to overcome those obstacles. Rather, the weight watcher passively steers around the obstacles.

While the Journey metaphor downplays the rigid rules that accompany participation in the Momentum Program, the Competition metaphor highlights these rules by reminding the weight watcher to “stay the course,” “stay on track,” etc. In addition, while the Journey metaphor does not highlight any specific techniques for overcoming the challenges and obstacles of weight loss, the Competition metaphor does by emphasizing Surveillance and Training including “being mindful” of bad habits and “practicing” good habits. At the same time however, while techniques and overcoming challenges and protection are highlighted, fun and creativity are downplayed in the Competition metaphor. That is, a weight watcher may become so entrenched in arming

him/herself with weight loss challenge solutions, that s/he may lose sight of the fun and creativity that accompanies the development of what Weight Watchers refers to as a new “lifestyle.” At first it seems that the emphasis on techniques such as Surveillance and Training as well as on Survival, overshadows the goal and that the goal becomes secondary. Triumph, however is highlighted which helps keep the goal intact.

Similar to the Competition metaphor, fun and creativity and to a greater extent—uniqueness—is downplayed in the Technical Maintenance metaphor as a consequence of the continuous “calculate[ions]” and “steps” that must be followed. As mentioned previously, a systematic method and rules are highlighted in the Technical Maintenance metaphor. the downplaying of fun, creativity, and uniqueness may be a consequence of the body being treated as a calculable, passive instrument. The weight watcher, by continuously “tracking” his/her progress through spreadsheets, graphs, charts, etc., is reminded of the system and/or rules s/he must follow in order to be successful in the program. Because the means or method by which one will achieve his/her goal is so heavily emphasized in the Technical Maintenance metaphor (through the emphasis of tools and tracking as well as the use of points formulas and calculations), the goal itself sometimes becomes secondary and is also downplayed. In other words, the weight watcher may become so wrapped up in figuring out and performing calculations and in “tracking,” for example, that s/he may lose sight of the actual goal.

Alternatively, in the Task metaphor, the goal is highlighted wherein there is a clear picture of the outcome. For example one must “rehearse” and “prepare” working up to the goal all so that the goal or final product will be just right. At the same time, the means by which one will achieve that goal is downplayed. For example, a weight

watcher is “building,” “connecting,” etc. in the Task metaphor but what materials, supplies, or tools the weight watcher should use to build and how (the method by which) the weight watcher builds, is unclear—the focus is on completing the Task or reaching the goal. In addition, whereas fun and creativity were downplayed in the Technical Maintenance metaphor, it is highlighted in the Task metaphor. In the Task metaphor, lively and exciting language is used to encourage weight watchers to “get creative and explore new recipes and cooking techniques,” to “color” his/her plate, and to “mix things up.”

Figure Four—Momentum Program Metaphors Highlight and Downplay Aspects of Weight Loss

	Journey	Competition	Technical Maintenance	Task
<b>Highlights</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• choice</li> <li>• exploration</li> <li>• endurance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• rigid rules</li> <li>• techniques for success</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• rigid rules</li> <li>• systematic method</li> <li>• means</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• goal</li> <li>• fun and creativity</li> </ul>
<b>Downplays</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• rigid rules</li> <li>• techniques for success</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• fun and creativity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• fun and creativity</li> <li>• goal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• means</li> </ul>

Figure Four summarizes the aspects of weight loss that are highlighted and downplayed in the Momentum Program metaphors. When looking more closely at what is produced and filtered, and/or highlighted and downplayed in each of the metaphors discussed in Chapter Two, it is clear that four different yet coherent and sometimes overlapping lenses through which the Momentum Program is understood are created by Weight Watchers. According to Ceccarelli (2004), the overlap of these lenses, despite

being contradictory at times, may result in a “more comprehensive understanding of a difficult subject matter” (p. 96). In fact, Ceccarelli goes as far as saying that contradictory or mixed metaphors are sometimes more beneficial so long as they “contradict each other in significant ways” (p. 96) because in doing so, they enrich our understanding of the tenor and are more likely to provide a more complicated understanding of the tenor.

### Metaphors Direct Action

We act in part, as a response to the realities metaphors construct. In other words, the realities that are created through the use of metaphors are not merely trivial—the construction of realities has consequences. Metaphors create a guide for action—they tell us how to act in ways that are consistent with the reality of a metaphor. For example, when discussing the nation-as-family and maternal metaphors, Hayden (2003) suggests that in understanding metaphors, people act out those metaphors within the context in which they are created. Metaphors have what Hayden refers to as, “performance potential” (p. 212). With that in mind, Weight Watchers has the potential, through the use of metaphors, to greatly influence the actions of its members as the members begin to perform or act out one or more of the metaphors.

With that in mind, a discussion of the ways in which the Journey, Competition, Technical Maintenance, and Task metaphors push dieters to engage in certain actions while discouraging them to engage in others is in order. In the Journey metaphor weight watchers are encouraged not only to make a decision but also to exercise moderation in making decisions. That is, weight watchers are explicitly encouraged to act in moderation by selecting a path with “gentle” hills, for example. Inherently then, weight



watchers are simultaneously (though implicitly) discouraged from choosing overly ambitious goals and means of achieving those goals. Similarly, weight watchers are encouraged to plan ahead by choosing a “route” before beginning. When encountering obstacles, weight watchers are not pushed to “tackle” those obstacles but rather to “avoid” those obstacles.

At the same time however, weight watchers are explicitly encouraged to address, or “tackle” obstacles and challenges in the Competition metaphor. Part of doing this involves using Weight Watcher tools and resources as well as protecting or “guarding” oneself of which weight watchers are explicitly encouraged to do. In other words, the kind of action that is encouraged in the Journey metaphor is much more passive than the kind of action encouraged in the Competition metaphor. Similarly, the Competition metaphor also pushes weight watchers to follow the rules of the program by “stay[ing] on track.” Staying on track involves, positive thinking. This is where weight watchers are explicitly discouraged from thinking negatively by “push[ing] past negative thoughts.” Moreover, because Triumph is highlighted, the Competition metaphor challenges the weight watcher and makes him/her think that weight loss or at least, the Momentum Program involves winning and that his/her job as a weight watcher is to win or Triumph.

The Technical Maintenance metaphor encourages the weight watcher to prevent problems including weight loss challenges and obstacles before they become problems. The Technical Maintenance metaphor pushes the weight watcher to consciously “track” various aspects of weight loss including hunger satisfaction, food and exercise patterns, and much more. In addition, it pushes the weight watcher, in “tracking” to develop a routine or pattern of check-ups and maintenance. This is different than the both the

Journey and Competition metaphors because those metaphors encourage either avoiding or overcoming challenges but not necessarily preventing problems. Moreover, with regard to problems, the Technical Maintenance metaphor also encourages the weight watcher to find existing problems (like a scientist or mechanic) and to fix those problems. Through calculations, tracking, and the use of a systematic method, the weight watcher will likely be able to identify and solve those problems while, as mentioned above, preventing future problems. In addition, the Technical Maintenance does allow the weight watcher to experiment but only to the extent that the experimenting follows the system or method set forth by the program.

Finally, the Task metaphor encourages the weight watcher to finish—the Task metaphor instills a sense of duty in the weight watcher by pushing him/her to “boost [his/her] efforts” and accomplish the goal. By instilling this sense of duty and accomplishment, the Task metaphor pushes the weight watcher to put time and resources into the program that s/he might not otherwise put into a weight loss program. In addition, the Task metaphor, as discussed in the second chapter both pushes the weight watcher to be “creative” but also to act within the rules of the program. This parallels all of the other three metaphors. The weight watcher is pushed to choose a route in the Journey but a route that of course, is approved by Weight Watchers just like the weight watcher is pushed to compete in the Competition metaphor but must obey the rules of the Competition. Similarly, the weight watcher is pushed to experiment to find solutions to problems in the Task metaphor but s/he should experiment only as far as the system or method allows him/her. In other words, all the metaphors get at this idea of being independent but only within the boundaries of the Momentum Program.

We define our reality in terms of metaphors and then act on the basis of those metaphors. Lakoff and Johnson support this idea stating, “we draw inferences, set goals, make commitments, and execute plans, all on the basis of how we in part structure our experience... by means of a metaphor” (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, p. 158). In processing the Momentum Program metaphors, Weight Watcher participants are able to learn a new way of thinking and *acting*. Weight watchers, in understanding the Momentum Program as a Journey, a Competition, Technical Maintenance, or a Task, act in ways to fit those realities or what they understand those realities to be. For example, weight watchers set goals based on the reality they understand the Momentum Program to be. If the reality of the Momentum Program is that the program is a Competition, the weight watcher will set goals according to that reality. Additionally, as each metaphor defines the role of the weight watcher as well as other aspects of the program differently, weight watchers are further encouraged to and discouraged from engaging in different actions depending on which metaphor or reality is perceived by the weight watcher.

### Interests

Both Cameron (2007) and Gard and Wright (2005) suggest that particular interests are advanced through the use of metaphors. This is significant because, as discussed in the previous section, metaphors influence action. For example, within the Momentum Program metaphors, descriptions of Weight Watcher products and services encourage weight watchers to purchase those products and services. The most obvious example of this is of course the name of the metaphor found within the title of the organization itself, *Weight Watchers*. Through the Competition and more specifically, the Surveillance metaphor, weight watchers are pushed to “watch” themselves by buying

into and using the products and services of Weight Watchers. This obviously benefits the organization financially. Weight Watchers also benefits from the “navigation” and “ally” metaphors wherein weight watchers are pushed to purchase companion booklets and guides. With that in mind, one must ask what and whose interests are advanced through Weight Watcher’s use of metaphors to describe the Momentum Program. Because Weight Watchers is a for-profit organization which is no secret, we must move beyond discussions of profit-motives.

In Chapter Two, I pointed out that one of the benefits of having multiple metaphors in play in the text is that multiple metaphors increase the chance that a person will be able to identify with the program by identifying with at least one of the metaphors. With that being said, Weight Watcher’s metaphors reach out to a diverse audience. By this I mean that the Journey, Competition, Technical Maintenance, and Task metaphors are versatile or dynamic in that they encompass characteristics that appeal and touch on the experiences of a large group of people. Overall, with the exception of its own, Weight Watcher’s Momentum Program metaphors do not seem to advance the interests of any one particular group over another’s.

It should be noted however, that within some of these metaphors are some cultural assumptions regarding the family, weight loss, and science, to name a few. In the Competition metaphor for example, where Survival is discussed, a Western tradition—a potluck—is discussed. The nature of a potluck is that people get together and each person brings a food dish. Weight Watchers, in encouraging members to avoid or “survive” potlucks, automatically assumes that there will be unhealthy food. This is the kind of thing Gard and Wright (2005) are referring to when they argue that weight loss

and weight control advocates make moral judgments and assumptions. Likewise, in the Journey and Competition metaphors there is an assumption that people need a “navigator” or “ally”—that people are not strong-willed or knowledgeable enough to make wise eating choices and that they need a “companion” to help them. Additionally, the “tracking,” “monitoring,” etc. that comes with the Technical Maintenance metaphor reinforces Western culture’s (specifically scientists’ and medical researchers’ according to Gard and Wright, 2005) dominant mode of thinking about weight loss. By this I mean that in treating the body as predictable by setting forth a Points system for example, scientists’ and medical researchers’ explanations of obesity and weight loss are supported. In other words, the above examples demonstrate ways in which assumptions embedded in the metaphors reinforce dominant Western values and ideas with regard to ways of thinking about obesity and weight loss.

In conclusion, there are certain assumptions embedded within some of the metaphors that promote or at least, reinforce Western culture’s understanding of obesity and weight loss. Gard and Wright will argue that the simple concept of Weight Watchers as an organization designed to help members of the public “watch” their weight, reinforces the negative moral assumptions in Western culture about obesity and weight loss. While Weight Watchers does reinforce scientists’ and medical researchers’ claims about weight loss including the understanding that weight loss can be achieved based on the energy-in/energy-out concept, Gard and Wright’s argument about the advancement of particular groups’ agendas however, does not completely hold true. The bottom line then, is that the metaphors Weight Watchers uses to describe the Momentum program

identify with a wide audience but at the same time, are embedded with Western culture based assumptions about obesity and weight loss.

### Concluding Remarks

In summary, metaphors serve a powerful orienting function wherein the weight watcher is able to orient not only him/herself within the program but also is able to position or structure the other components of the Momentum Program in accordance to the reality or metaphor through which they understand the program to be. Furthermore, metaphors become an even deeper reality once we act in terms of that reality (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Thus, by acting in harmony with the reality Weight Watchers has structured the Momentum Program to be, that metaphor or reality is reinforced. Note that in engaging in action—in performing within the realities Weight Watchers has created for its members, members can act out or perform multiple roles simultaneously. In other words, weight watchers are not necessarily limited to one metaphor or reality. Weight watchers can act both as a scientist and a soldier simultaneously. When metaphors overlap and interact like this, action can either be limited or reinforced. For example, while the Journey metaphor acknowledges the challenges and obstacles of the Momentum Program, it does not offer specific techniques for overcoming those challenges but rather tells the weight watcher to passively “avoid” those obstacles by “steer[ing]” around them. When the Journey metaphor interacts with the Competition metaphor, however, specific techniques both for being prepared for those challenges and for overcoming those challenges are highlighted through the Surveillance and Training concepts in particular. Specific action or techniques are highlighted. This is how the interaction of metaphors relative to action expand and reinforce one another to provide a

more complex understanding of the Momentum Program. Though the two metaphors seem to contradict one another they do so in what Ceccarelli (2004) referred to as “significant” and thus they actually function to narrow down information and to increase and provide a richer understanding of the Momentum Program. Because weight watchers are not limited to one metaphor and/or reality, a weight watcher may be better able to understand the “nuts and bolts” of the Momentum Program. At the same time, in learning the “nuts and bolts” of the program, negative moral assumptions in Western culture are reinforced and weight watchers are encouraged to act in ways that continue to reinforce those assumptions.

## CHAPTER 4

### IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Weight Watchers has the potential to influence fundamental life choices about eating and exercise patterns as well as consumer choices about weight loss products and programs. Therefore, an evaluation of the implications of Weight Watcher's use of rhetorical tactics and particularly, their use of metaphors is important. I have looked at metaphors as a rhetorical tool Weight Watchers uses to motivate and persuade consumers to lose weight and join the Momentum Program by creating a reality, highlighting and downplaying certain aspects of that reality, influence action, and reinforce assumptions about obesity and weight loss. I must now discuss the overlap of the weight loss literature and the Momentum Program metaphors thinking specifically about how metaphors do or do not function to reinforce disciplinary practices and what the consequences of those practices are. In addition, I will discuss the ways in which the metaphors overlap with the various forms of care of the self discussed in Chapter One. Finally, I will discuss the implications of understanding Weight Watcher's Momentum Program through metaphors. Specifically, the issue is how *multiple* metaphors enable and constrain one's understanding of the tenor.

#### Understanding Aspects of Weight Loss through the Momentum Program Metaphors

This leads to a discussion of the intersection of Weight Watcher's Momentum Program metaphors and the academic literature that deals with the body and weight loss. As I discussed in the first chapter, the body is often studied as a text of cultural meaning wherein power is manifest. Foucault (1977), for example, argues that the body is a site wherein power is exercised while Bordo (2003) argues that the body is a site where



struggles to shape power take place. More recent scholars however, believe there is a more complicated explanation of power and the body. Heyes (2006), for example, accepts Foucault and Bordo's arguments but also argues that dieting, is not completely disempowering. Rather, argues Heyes, there are enabling or empowering aspects of dieting. Since Weight Watchers functions as an organization designed to help people change their bodies through weight loss, there develops an important overlap of these ideas and the Momentum Program metaphors. In this section then, I will first discuss the ways in which Weight Watchers' Momentum Program metaphors interact with the docile body and the mind/body duality. I will then discuss how the metaphors reinforce disciplinary practices and the care of the self, and finally, I will discuss how the Momentum Program metaphors function to problematize, normalize, and valorize weight loss.

#### The Docile Body, Mind/Body Duality, Disciplinary Practices, and Care of the Self

The Momentum Program metaphors really get at Foucault's (1977) concept of the docile body. A docile body is produced when the body receives continuous attention and is constantly observed and supervised. The Competition and Technical Maintenance metaphors in particular, very clearly encourage a docile body. For example, in the Competition metaphor, the body is continuously surveilled while the body is to be continuously "tracked" and "monitored" in the Technical Maintenance metaphor. Moreover, just as the Journey is to be an enduring or continuous one, the observation that accompanies the production of the docile body is also enduring or continuous. This continuous Surveillance includes "paying attention" to the tiniest details such as the kind and amount of food one eats, the reaction the body has to those foods including hunger

satisfaction and weight gain or loss, and much more. Finally, this kind of continuous observation or supervision is work. It is very much a Task wherein one must work hard (like in a Job) in order to receive some kind of “pay off” or reward.

It is important to note that both the weight watcher him/herself and Weight Watchers the organization, help to construct the docile body described above. Based on Foucault’s (1977) notion of biopower, the weight watcher, in performing all of the surveillance, tracking, etc. exercises power over his/her body. At the same time, Weight Watchers itself holds a great deal of power by putting into place disciplinary practices wherein the organization acts as the “navigator” or “boss” of its members exercising a great deal of power over others’ bodies. By creating a program through which others take direction, Weight Watchers gains control over the bodies of its members which is precisely what Foucault means when he discusses biopower as the power one has over other bodies. In summary then, the Momentum Program metaphors not only illustrate Foucault’s notion of a docile body but also Foucault’s notion of biopower. In addition, the overlap of these ideas with the Momentum Program metaphors gets at some of the reasons people get so wrapped up in diet and exercise which leads back to some of the very first questions I posed in both the Preface and Introductory Chapter of this thesis.

Likewise, the Journey and Technical Maintenance metaphors, in particular, reinforce Bordo’s (2003) notion of the mind/body duality by setting forth the body and mind and as two separate things. Bordo’s notion of the mind/body duality is when the body is talked about, portrayed, and understood as passive while the mind is understood as being active. Though it is not completely clear through the Journey metaphor alone that the body is the means or vehicle, the interaction of the Journey and Technical

Maintenance metaphors discussed in the second and third chapters makes this separation clear. In the Journey metaphor the mind is the driver or navigator while body is the means or the vehicle through which one reaches his/her destination. Likewise, in the Technical Maintenance metaphor, the body is set forth as a machine while the mind acts upon the machine like a scientist or mechanic. The body becomes calculable and predictable while the mind, just like a scientist or mechanic, follows a certain protocol in order to make the machine work the way s/he would like. In other words, while the body is calculable, the mind actively performs those calculations. This is important because the Momentum Program metaphors reinforce the mind/body duality which pushes people to engage in disciplinary actions that further emphasize a false body image which, according to Bordo, can lead to serious health risks.

From a combined Foucauldian/Feminist perspective, however, Heyes (2006) argues that there is more explanation to these questions. Heyes acknowledges the disciplinary practices of dieting and how those practices may contribute to the manifestation of power by reinforcing a docile body and false ideal. In doing so though, Heyes notes that these kinds of disciplinary practices may actually be empowering because they contribute to the care of the self. In other words, this kind of attention to the body plays into the idea of self-care. While the creation and re-creation of the docile body is a result of discipline, it also allows for care of the self. With that in mind, the Momentum Program metaphors must be evaluated in light of the four parallels Heyes points out between Foucault's notion of care of the self and Weight Watcher's weight loss rhetoric discussed in Chapter One.

Weight Watchers and more specifically, the Momentum Program, contributes to self-care by “arming” weight watchers with new knowledge and skills while also encouraging them to make themselves a priority and allowing weight watchers to make individual choices. First, with regard to knowledge and specifically, self-knowledge, the Momentum Program metaphors encourage Surveillance of the self by encouraging weight watchers to “watch,” “pay attention,” and be “mindful” of oneself. In surveiling the self in such a way, the weight watcher learns about his/her mind and body through the signals and responses they send, for example.

Next, with regard to new skills, the Momentum Program metaphors heavily emphasize the cultivation of new skills and capacities. For example, weight watchers are encouraged in the Task metaphor to “get creative and explore new recipes and cooking techniques.” In addition, the cultivation of new skills is seen both in the Competition metaphor wherein weight watchers are taught how to develop “plan[s]” and “strategies” and in the Technical Maintenance metaphor where weight watchers learn new ways of “managing,” “tracking,” etc. one’s eating and exercise patterns as well as one’s body. Important in this form of care of the self is that these skills, as Heyes (2006) notes, can be applied to and improve other areas of dieters’ lives. The Momentum Program metaphors in particular however, are not as explicit about applying skills and techniques learned to other areas of life.

The third form of care of the self is where the Momentum Program metaphors don’t quite line up with Heyes’ (2006) argument that Weight Watcher’s rhetoric encourages, just as Foucault suggests care of the self should, making the self a priority. Rather, in the Momentum Program metaphors, weight watchers are encouraged to find a

happy-medium between caring for the self and caring for other by “juggle[ing]” the obligations of “busy parents” and by “master[ing] the art of finding that ‘just right’ balance.”

Finally, with regard to the fourth form of care of the self described by Heyes (2006), wherein care of the self involves individual freedom of choice, some of the Momentum Program metaphors encourage this. The Journey and Task metaphors (wherein the means is downplayed and the goal is highlighted) encourage individual freedom of choice more so than the Competition and Technical Maintenance metaphors (wherein the means are highlighted). The Journey metaphor for example, states that a weight watcher should “choose a route” just as the Task metaphor tells the weight watcher to “build” but leaves the decisions for how to build to up to the individual weight watcher. The Competition and Technical Maintenance metaphors however, provide specific strategies and methods limiting individual freedom of choice. In summary, the Momentum Program metaphors do emphasize different forms of care of the self although the metaphors do not engage in the four forms of the care of the self as fully or completely as Heyes suggests Weight Watcher’s weight loss rhetoric does.

In conclusion, participation in disciplinary practices and specifically in the Momentum Program provides dieters with new knowledge and skills including control over one’s diet, body, and mind. Gard and Wright (2005) reinforce this idea in part, by stating that, “in times of risk and uncertainty the body has become a site over which individuals can feel that they have some control” (p. 176). In other words, by actively following the guidelines of the program, people overcome challenges and negative habits and develop new, positive habits which helps them feel in control. Thus, while dieting

may reinforce the docile body, the process of creating the docile body may in turn generate new knowledge, skills, and capacities. Participation in the Momentum Program is not just work on the body but it is also work on the self which can be empowering or enabling. With that in mind, the Momentum Program metaphors affirm Heyes' (2006) arguments that disciplinary practices are both limiting and enabling and that they contribute to the care of the self. Weight Watchers resonates with a large number of people, according to Heyes, because it offers up opportunities not only for weight loss but also, and perhaps more importantly, for the gaining of new knowledge, skills, and care of the self. With that in mind, Bordo (2003), who emphasizes the major health risks associated with dieting, the creation of a docile body, and disciplinary practices, must also acknowledge that there are both physical and psychological health *benefits* involved as well.

#### Problematization, Normalization, and Valorization

By problematizing the process of weight loss and normalizing actual weight loss, the Momentum Program metaphors create a reality for weight watchers in which weight loss is difficult but achievable for the average person. According to Thompson and Hirschman (1995), normalization is the process in which some phenomenon is culturally constructed as the norm—as typical, ordinary, and/or average. Problematization occurs when something deviates from the norm. Put another way, problematization refers to the process in which some social phenomenon that does not conform to the norm is constructed as a problem precisely because it does not conform to the norm. Often, normalization deals with setting forth the solution to that problem. Based on the Momentum Program metaphors found in the text, Weight Watchers does not necessarily

or at least, explicitly, problematize obesity nor does it normalize an ideal body like Bordo (2003) and Thompson and Hirschman suggest the mass media does. Rather, Weight Watchers, recognizes that cultural norms and ideals have already established obesity as a problem and normalized an ideal body. With that in mind, Weight Watcher's rhetoric and more specifically, its metaphors, pick up from that point focusing on the weight loss itself.

What the metaphors describing the Momentum Program do problematize, is losing weight—they present the *process* of losing weight as difficult by discussing the various challenges and obstacles one must overcome in order to lose weight. The process of losing weight is problematized—explained and/or described as difficult—through each of the metaphor clusters. In the Journey metaphor for example, the “curveballs,” “rough patches,” and “standstills” of weight loss (to name a few) are discussed as challenges and obstacles to weight loss. In other words, these kinds of metaphors help problematize the process of losing weight. The same thing happens in the Competition metaphor when weight watchers are encouraged to be “armed” and “on guard,” for challenges and obstacles. Likewise, the process of losing weight is problematized by the need for maintenance and repair “tools” in the Technical Maintenance metaphor and by describing weight loss as work in the Task metaphor.

In presenting these problems, Weight Watchers also presents a solution—the Momentum Program (and the various aspects like points and tracking that come with it). In presenting the Momentum Program as a solution to the difficult process of losing weight, weight loss becomes normalized—weight loss becomes a typical part of participation in the Momentum Program and the process of losing weight is no longer a

problem. If one “sticks” to the rules of the program, s/he is sure to succeed meeting his/her goals. This is why and how “watching,” “tracking,” “monitoring,” “managing,” and weight loss as a whole becomes normalized. Weight loss is further normalized by the fact that none of the metaphors in the texts account for a situation when a weight watcher does not lose weight. Within all of the metaphors, it becomes normal for a weight watcher to act within set boundaries and to lose weight in doing so. In fact, reaching one’s weight loss goal, though challenging according to the texts, is no longer ideal but rather, normal. For example, a common metaphor in the texts states, “watch your body transform” as if it is perfectly normal for every participant’s body to be transformed while participating in the Momentum Program.

Finally, though normal and typical, this is where weight loss is valorized because not only is it normal for a participant to lose weight through the Momentum Program but also it is a good thing—there is a “pay off,” a “bonus,” etc. That is, actual weight loss is celebrated as something special, although it is simultaneously touted as normal when participating in the Momentum Program. This is something Thompson and Hirschman overlook in discussing consumer culture and the problematization and normalization of the ideal body. Thompson and Hirschman’s work might benefit from this addition because the concept of valorization may help to further explain why it is that people engage in consumption and disciplinary weight loss practices. In other words, this gets at the recurring question—why is it that people get so wrapped up in weight loss? Valorization may be a reason people are motivated to engage in the disciplinary practices that accompany weight loss. Just as Heyes (2006) argues that the enabling aspects as well as the self-care practices that accompany dieting are an additional motivating factor



for people to engage in disciplinary practices, I argue that valorization of weight loss is also a motivating factor. Beyond simply being normal, people get to celebrate being normal and the celebratory aspect of weight loss may be an additional motivating factor to engage in weight loss practices. Thus, the idea that the Momentum Program metaphors valorize weight loss contributes and extends Heyes' arguments that women diet "over and over again, seeking to regain the sense of reincarnation that the process is designed to cultivate." By celebrating weight loss, the metaphors in some ways, make the process of weight loss so appealing that weight watchers may be perpetually desiring to be in a continuous weight loss mode.

In summary, the problematization of the process of losing weight and the normalization and valorization of actual weight loss through metaphors comes with a number of implications. First, by problematizing the process of losing weight, a program—or solution—is designed wherein participants continuously track their bodies to the point that it becomes normal. This is in part, how the docile body becomes normalized. In other words, by presenting the Momentum Program as a solution to the difficult process of weight loss, Weight Watchers encourages "tracking," Surveillance, etc. of the body in turn encouraging and even normalizing a docile body. In addition, the problematization of the process of weight loss and normalization and valorization of actual weight loss reinforces the notion of biopower wherein Weight Watchers, by setting forth a product people depend on to be "normal" or average and to overcome the obstacles of weight loss, exercises a great deal of power over others. At the same time however, the problematization of the process of weight loss resulting in the Momentum Program or in a docile body, pushes people to develop new skills and knowledge and to

work on and care for the self. Moreover, it allows people to celebrate achieving the norm—it provides valorization.

### Multiple Metaphors

In Chapter Two, I discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the use of multiple metaphors noting that the use of multiple metaphors to describe the Momentum Program is beneficial in part, because no single metaphor can fully address the open-ended complexity of social life. At the same time, I note that while all of the metaphors are coherent, they do not always provide one single, consistent image of the tenor. Like Lakoff and Johnson (1980) however, Cecarelli (2004) notes that these inconsistencies are not necessarily a bad thing. Rather, notes Cecarelli, one must look at the entire stretch of discourse to determine whether or not multiple metaphors provide a more or less rich understanding of the tenor. In this section I will synthesize the latter half of Chapter Two explaining how the use of multiple metaphors like the Momentum Program metaphors affects the rhetorical functions of the metaphor discussed in Chapter Three.

### Multiple Metaphors Create Realities

Multiple metaphors create realities that are sometimes one single, consistent image but other times are not. For example, the reality of the Journey metaphor is that the Momentum Program is an adventure while the reality of the Task metaphor is that the Momentum Program is a Task. The adventure suggests fun and willingness while duty suggests work and a sense of obligation. With that in mind, it seems that the interaction of these two metaphors is somewhat contradictory—on the one hand, the Momentum Program is fun while on the other hand, it is work. At the same time however, an adventure may at times, be like a duty—it might involve work just as a duty or Task can

turn into an adventure and be fun. With that in mind, this study affirms Lakoff and Johnson's idea that multiple metaphors can be contradictory yet coherent. Moreover, this study further affirms Cecarelli's (2004) argument that "the interaction between two presumably conflicting vehicles that apply to the same tenor leads to neither a confusing mixture of contradictory entailments nor to a promising collaboration of complementary concepts that works to more accurately represent a difficult subject matter" (p. 103).

#### Multiple Metaphors Highlight and Downplay

One disadvantage of multiple metaphors discussed in Chapter Two is that metaphors offer a lot of information which in turn creates a lot of work for the consumer of the metaphors because s/he must organize all the information. At the same time however, multiple metaphors in addition to context, may serve as terministic screens (Burke, 1966) for one another. That is, multiple metaphors can help filter the potential meaning of one another by highlighting only the entailments of the metaphors that are found in all of the metaphors (to create a consistent, single image) rather than highlighting entailments that are found in each individual metaphor. In other words, multiple metaphors can function in part, to filter out the potential meaning each individual metaphor has. On the one hand, this may clear up inconsistencies between metaphors but on the other hand, it may reduce or simplify our understanding whereas we could have had a more rich understanding without this kind of screen or filtering which is what the Momentum Program metaphors do. For example, by describing the Momentum Program as both a Journey and Technical Maintenance, one understands that a weight watcher goes on his/her Journey by means of a vehicle—a machine—as described in the Technical Maintenance metaphor. The possibility that a weight watcher goes on his/her

Journey by means of horseback or on foot is not highlighted through the interaction of these two metaphors—those possibilities are screened out.

In addition, by consistently screening out the possibility of not losing weight—that is, no one single metaphor of the four used to describe the Momentum Program accounts for not losing weight—multiple metaphors further highlight and normalize weight loss. Thus, because not even one of the multiple metaphors used to describe the Momentum Program accounts for this, weight loss is further normalized and the possibility that someone might not lose weight is unaccounted for.

With that in mind, this study not only affirms Condit et al.'s (2002) arguments about metaphors filtering in and filtering out information but also extends Condit et al.'s argument to include the idea that *multiple* metaphors interact with one another to further filter in and out information about the tenor. In fact, multiple metaphors may decrease the “potential production of meaning” individual metaphors have implementing an additional filter—multiple metaphors.

### Multiple Metaphors Encourage Action

Multiple metaphors encourage action but *how* they encourage action is still unclear. That is, whether multiple metaphors encourage action by providing many options or by limiting action and encouraging one clear course of action is unclear. To begin with, the use of multiple metaphors may motivate action in the Momentum Program for example, because a variety of ways or means to go about overcoming challenges and obstacles is provided. Variety opens up more opportunities or forms of action. This may get back, in part, to the recurring question in the previous section regarding why and how it is that people engage in disciplinary practices. In other words,

if multiple metaphors offer a greater variety of courses of action more than a single metaphor does, this may be another reason weight loss and particularly, the Momentum Program resonates so strongly with such a large number of people. At the same time however, if multiple metaphors serve as terministic screens for one another, multiple metaphors may limit the possible courses of action for a weight watcher. Yet another alternative however, is that the terministic screens result in a more clear and obvious course of action which goes back to motivating action. Thus, it seems that there are a number of routes the use of multiple metaphors can take in order to encourage action. Whether multiple forms of action or one clear course of action is encouraged, multiple metaphors, in one way or another, do in fact encourage some kind of action. With that in mind, Bineham (1991) and Hayden's (2003) arguments that metaphors function in part, to encourage action holds true. As demonstrated by this study of the Momentum Program metaphors however, future research on metaphors may benefit from a more in-depth look at the ways in which multiple metaphors encourage action by both increasing and limiting the possible courses of action.

#### Summary of Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to our understanding of both weight loss and of metaphors. Initially, the study began by looking at how Weight Watcher's use of metaphors to describe the Momentum program influence weight watchers' understanding of weight loss. Throughout, the factors that motivate engagement in the disciplinary practices that accompany weight loss have been discussed. In addition, insight about the effectiveness of the use of multiple metaphors in a single text or set of texts has been discussed.

One of the main questions driving my research on weight loss and metaphors deals with why and how people become “so wrapped up in diet and exercise” (Preface, Chapter 1). While Bordo (2003) and Thompson and Hirschman (1995) focus on false consciousness as the answer to this question, my analysis demonstrates that people participate in weight loss as a result of the physical and psychological health *benefits* that accompany engagement in disciplinary practices. In addition, I have shown that people are likely to be motivated to engage in these practices because of the celebration or valorization they receive upon achieving weight loss or achieving the norm.

This leads to a discussion of the theoretical implications of the use of multiple metaphors. First, both Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and Cecarelli’s (2004) arguments about the capacity of multiple metaphors to be both complimentary and contradictory hold true. In addition, while metaphors serve as terministic screens highlighting certain aspects of reality, metaphors also serve as terministic screens for one another when multiple metaphors are used simultaneously in a text or set of texts. This idea adds to both Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) argument about highlighting and downplaying and Condit et al.’s argument about the ability of metaphors to produce and filter information about the tenor by adding *multiple* metaphors as an additional filter. Finally, multiple metaphors function in part, to encourage action by increasing and limiting the possible courses of action.

### Conclusion

Metaphors, in part, demonstrate the dynamic power of language in shaping our understanding of different ideas, concepts, and things. Weight Watcher’s metaphors provide a rhetorical framework in which the Momentum program including the role of

the body, mind, and weight watcher as a whole can be understood. In other words, the Momentum Program metaphors help eliminate confusion and “structure chaos” (Edge, 1974, p. 137) by putting together difficult weight loss related ideas. In doing so, Momentum Program realities are created so that the Momentum Program may be understood as a Journey, Competition, Technical Maintenance, and/or Task. Within each of these metaphors, different aspects of those realities are highlighted or downplayed, action is encouraged or discouraged, and cultural assumptions and judgments are reinforced. Moreover, these metaphors interact with one another to create a more complicated understanding of weight loss and of metaphors. In conclusion, this study contributes to our understanding of weight loss and of metaphors. Initially, the study began by looking at how Weight Watcher’s use of metaphors to describe the Momentum program influence weight watchers’ understanding of the program. Throughout, however, additional characteristics of weight loss dieting and uses of metaphors have been discovered leading to implications for both weight loss dieting literature and metaphor communication literature.

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  - Book 5—Surviving Dining Out: Eat Out and on the Run
  - Book 6—Solution and Ideas: Keep on Tracking
  - Book 7—Great Tasting Meals Worth Sharing: Eat Together
  - Book 8—Mix-It-Up Recipes: Beyond Chicken

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